WORLD/A10

Saddam claims he was beaten in US custody

LIFESTYLE/D1

Survey of top toys on most big boys' Christmas wish list

BUSINESS/B1

Energy department to lead Malampaya oil project

ENTERTAINMENT/A2-1

Stars' wishes: World peace, housebroken puppies, etc.

Recall of EO creating energy superbody urged

By Philip C. Tubeza
and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A STAUNCH ALLY OF PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo yesterday urged her to recall an order creating an oil and energy superbody that will assume practically all the functions of Energy Secretary Raphael Lotilla.

RECALL/ A22

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Mayor's face glows on Christmas lanterns

By Nancy C. Carvajal

HE GIVES NEW MEANING to the word "starstruck."

The face of Caloocan Mayor Enrico Echiverri is pasted on Christmas lanterns hanging from

MAYOR'S/ A22

YAN ANG BITUING WALANG NINGNING!

Ramos warns GMA on no-election plan

Threatens to pull out support for President

By Cynthia D. Balana

FORMER PRESIDENT Fidel V. Ramos yesterday rejected as a "monumental blunder" a proposal to scrap elections in 2007 and threatened to withdraw support from President Macapagal-Arroyo unless she declared by New Year's Day that she opposed the move.

"I can say that my support is waning right now," Ramos said in a nationally televised interview with ANC, reacting to the recommendation last week by the 55-member Constitutional Commission to get rid of the upcoming balloting for local offices, Congress and half of the Senate, extend the term of incumbent officials and pave the way for parliamentary elections in 2010.

The former military chief's declaration of support of Ms Arroyo in July was regarded as a key factor that saved her administration from collapse in the midst of mounting calls for her resignation. This followed revelations in the "Hello Garci" wiretaps that suggested she stole last year's elections.

The 77-year-old Ramos said he had no problem with the parliamentary system proposed by the 55-member commission handpicked by Ms Arroyo to recommend amendments to the Constitution to replace the presidential system.

"That's the first basic step that must be taken. But on the no elections, I consider that a monumental blunder," he said.

"I'm not giving her a deadline or ultimatum," Ramos said of his

RAMOS/ A4

TWO DAYS BEFORE CHRISTMAS DAY

STAR-STUDDED. It's a season of great joy and anticipation for the children of a Christmas lantern seller on Roxas Boulevard.

RYAN LIM

ROGER MARGALLO

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS. A "balikbayan" family arrives at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport looking none the worse for wear.

ROYAL POOCHES. These are no ordinary mutts, they're St. Bernards dressed as Three Kings during a Christmas dog show in Baguio City.

TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

SC to veer away from policy of intervention

By Armand N. Nocum

NEWLY APPOINTED CHIEF JUSTICE Artemio Panganiban yesterday vowed to steer the Supreme Court away from the controversial "interventionist" policy of his predecessor and defer to the government the resolution of issues involving business and finance.

"When there is a doubt as to whether the judiciary should intervene with actions and policies of the political department of the government in matters involving the prosperity of our people, I will defer to the judgment of the political branches," Panganiban said.

Panganiban spoke at a news conference a day after he was sworn into office as the country's head magistrate following the retirement of Chief Justice Hilario Davide Jr. on Tuesday at the age of 70.

Panganiban's view represents a break from the Davide court, which had been criticized for taking head on questions involving government contracts, finance and economics.

A former poor newsboy who rose to the top of the judiciary, Panganiban promised "to safe-

SC TO VEER/ A6

GMA donated to Veritas, says Rosales

By Christian V. Esguerra

MANILA ARCHBISHOP GAUDENCIO Rosales yesterday said President Macapagal-Arroyo's controversial P1-million donation did not go to his "Pondo ng Pinoy" project to help the poor but to the Church-owned Radio Veritas.

Rosales made the clarification in an apparent effort to clear his name over the generous contribution which his critics in the hierarchy said was Ms Arroyo's way of courting his support amid demands for her resignation over charges she stole last year's elections.

"She did not give anything to Pondo, certainly not to me," he told reporters over lunch.

He said the amount was given to Fr. Anton Pascual, executive director of the Pondo ng Pinoy Foundation Inc.

Rosales broke his silence nearly a month after the INQUIRER re-

GMA/ A22

'Silahis ng Pasko' makes kids gay

By Vincent Cabreza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

BAGUIO CITY—EVERY CHRISTMAS SEASON, "Silahis ng Pasko" literally makes Baguio's impoverished children happy and gay.

And it has nothing to do with the so-called third sex, despite the unfortunate meaning that has come to be attached to the word. ("Silahis" is Filipino slang for homosexual.)

This American-built city has learned to love the 32-year-old Christmas charity program, as much as the other charity programs conceptualized by Narciso Padilla, Baguio's self-proclaimed Santa Claus.

Padilla, 74, is an unacknowledged eventologist whose outlandish projects often draw ridicule despite the fact that they cheer up the summer capital's underprivileged.

Silahis ng Pasko, for example, produces chess matches for the blind and parlor games for the elderly. It has also provided cash prizes and trophies to children born on Christmas Day.

But it is only one notch on Padilla's belt.

He has also come up with a "lucky foreign visitor" program, which offers select foreign tourists free lodging in a hotel, as well as dinner and a tour of the city. (But this program is low-key compared to the "lucky summer visitor" project of the Baguio Correspondents and Broadcasters Club during Holy Week.)

Padilla recently started a contest for twins in Baguio who come closest to being identical. "I don't think anyone else has

SILAHIS/ A22

P42-B DEBT TO NAPOCOR

Meralco assailed for pass-on bid

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

A BIG CONSUMER GROUP YESTERDAY said Manila Electric Co., not its 4 million household and business customers in its franchise area, should pay the P42 billion it allegedly owes state-owned National Power Corp. in connection with a soured 10-year power supply agreement.

Pete L. Ilagan, president of the National Association of Electricity Consumers for Reforms Inc. (Nasecore), lashed at the Lopez-owned Meralco for stating that it would simply pass on the cost of paying off its obligations to Napocor by charging customers higher electricity rates.

In an interview, Ilagan said Meralco was trying to win over its customers to its side in the raging controversy between the private distribution utility and the state-owned power generating firm.

"They are misleading the public. The P42 billion is considered a penalty that should be borne solely by Meralco and not by its customers who were never party to the contract signed in 1994," said Ilagan, who has represented consumer interests in hearings at the Energy Regulatory Commission.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita on Wednesday confirmed that Malacañang was considering a government takeover of Meralco by converting into equity the P42 billion that the utility allegedly owed Napocor. Another option being considered by the government is the liquidation of the P42 billion in collectibles through annual payments of P14 billion by Meralco for three years.

Also on Wednesday, Napocor president Cyril del Callar confirmed that Napocor's filings with the Commission on Audit showed that Meralco owed the state-owned firm P42 billion. Napocor's claim stemmed from a supply contract with Meralco from 1994 to 2004. The deal required Meralco to buy a minimum volume of electricity

MERALCO/ A6

WEATHER FORECAST

FORECAST: Eastern and Southern Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao will experience cloudy skies with scattered rainshowers and isolated thunderstorms becoming widespread rains over Bicol region and Eastern sections of Visayas and Mindanao. The rest of Luzon will have partly cloudy to cloudy skies with isolated rainshowers.

COMPILED BY JAMIE ALARCON, PDI RESEARCH/12/23/05 SOURCE PAGASA

Second FrontPage

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Metro Manila	Partly Cloudy	Iloilo/Bacolod	Cloudy with Rains
Baguio	Partly Cloudy	Roxas	Cloudy with Rains
Tuguegarao	Partly Cloudy	Cebu	Cloudy with Rains
Laoag	Partly Cloudy	Tacloban	Cloudy with Rains
Clark Zone	Partly Cloudy	Gen. Santos	Cloudy with Rains
Tagaytay	Cloudy with Rains	Zamboanga	Cloudy with Rains
Legazpi	Cloudy with Rains	Cagayan de Oro	Cloudy with Rains
Calapan	Cloudy with Rains	Davao	Cloudy with Rains

NPA rebs: No Christmas truce

LUCENA CITY—THE NEW PEOPLE'S ARMY rebels will not observe a Christmas ceasefire with government forces this year, rebel spokesperson Gregorio "Ka Roger" Rosal announced Thursday midnight.

In a mobile phone text message in Filipino, Rosal said officials of the Communist Party of the Philippines and the NPA, its military wing, saw no reason to declare a truce this Christmas and New Year's Day in the wake of recent spate of attacks by the military and "other US-Arroyo-sanctioned armed groups" against innocent civilians.

Rosal cited the government's "insincerity" in the peace talks as another reason for their nonobservance of the Christmas ceasefire.

"The non-observance of the ceasefire this year was in response to the intense and widespread call of the people for the NPA to continue to inflict solid blows against the hated US-Arroyo regime to hasten its downfall," Rosal said.

Rosal said about 110 leftist activists, including journalists and human rights lawyers, had been killed since March this year. Four members of a nongovernmental organization in Central Luzon were added to the list last week.

1st since 2000

Rosal said the last time communists did not declare a Christmas truce was in 2000, when then President Joseph Estrada suspended the peace talks and ordered an all-out war against the rebels.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines has said it wants a shorter-than-usual truce with the 8,000-member NPA over the holidays due to concerns about increased violence in the countryside. It has recommended a two-day Christmas and New Year unilateral ceasefire, which Malacañang said might likely be approved by President Arroyo.

Since 1986, the government has declared a holiday ceasefire with communist and Muslim rebels as the mainly Roman Catholic country marks one of the longest yuletide seasons in the world.

The Christmas season here, celebrated with family reunions and parties, starts with dawn Masses on Dec. 16 and ends at the feast of Epiphany on Jan. 6.

In Manila, Director Vidal Querol, chief of the National Capital Region Police Office, said the police were prepared to defend cities against possible rebel attacks.

"We will not allow these communists and their lackeys (to) steal the joys and cheers of Christmas," said Querol.

For his part Philippine National Police Deputy Director General Avelino Razon Jr. said, "(The rejection of a truce) shows bad faith on the part of the CPP-NPA. They themselves do not want peace during Christmas." said Razon.

The NPA, active in 69 of 79 provinces, usually limits attacks to the countryside, targeting officials it deems to be corrupt and businesses which refuse to pay "revolutionary war taxes."

More than 40,000 people have been killed in the insurgency since the late 1960s, scaring investors and slowing rural development in one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries.

Peace negotiations with the communist rebels, brokered by Norway, have been stalled since August 2004 when Manila declined to help persuade the United States from dropping the rebel movement from its terror blacklist. *Delfin T. Mallari Jr. and Job B. Belen, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau; Luige del Puerto and Reuters*

Rains to ease up Christmas weekend

By Norman Bordadora

IT WON'T BE ALL SUNSHINE this Christmas weekend, but there would be enough of a break from the past week's heavy rains to conduct disaster relief and rehabilitation efforts in Occidental Mindoro and northern Palawan.

Graciano Yumul Jr., Officer in Charge of the Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration (Pagasa), reported to Malacañang and the National Disaster Coordination Council officials that based on the latest developments monitored by weather satellite, that it would be advisable to take advantage of the expected break from the rains.

"[It] may afford sufficient elbow room to step up disaster relief and rehabilitation efforts in areas severely affected by the widespread flooding and landslides caused by a combination of the tail end of tropical depression Quedan, the tail end of the cold front and the inter-tropical convergence zone," Yumul said.

Occidental Mindoro and Palawan would continue to experience cloudy and dreary weather this Christmas weekend but Pagasa weather branch chief Nathaniel Cruz told the INQUIRER that the amount of rainfall would be less making relief efforts possible.

"It will not be sunshiny but there will be less rain and will make relief efforts possible," Cruz said.

In a news release, Pagasa said that northern and central Luzon, and Metro Manila would be experiencing good weather conditions over the holiday weekend. However, the Visayas and Mindanao, particularly their eastern portions, would have rainy weather.

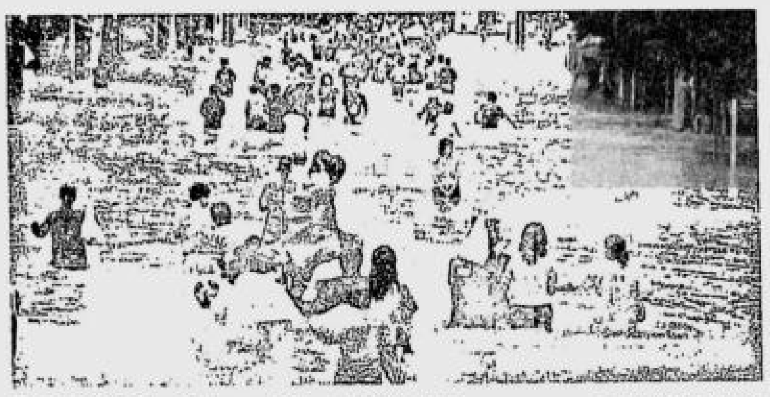
Pagasa yesterday issued the weather outlook for today until Dec. 26.

According to the Pagasa website, Laoag City, Tuguegarao, Baguio City, Manila, Subic, Tagaytay City and Legaspi City will have partly cloudy to at times cloudy weather with rain showers on Christmas Day.

These cities will have more or less the same weather today and tomorrow except for Tagaytay and Legaspi which are expected to have more rains today. On Sunday, Christmas Day, the sun is expected to shine but there will be some cloud cover and rain over these areas in Luzon.

Puerto Princesa City, Bacolod City, Cebu, Tacloban, Cagayan de Oro, Davao and Zamboanga City are expected to have cloudy weather with rain showers and thunderstorms today until Dec. 26, according to the weather bulletin issued at 5 a.m. yesterday.

"Pagasa is providing the special weather outlook to guide the public in their travel plans, especially since the exodus of holiday vacationers to their home provinces are expected to peak during the Christmas season," Pagasa said in its news release.



FLOODING in Calapan, Oriental Mindoro CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

GMA appeals for help for flood victims

By Christine O. Avendaño

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO yesterday asked people to spread some Christmas cheer by helping victims of the flood-devastated provinces of Palawan and Mindoro.

"I am appealing to all of you to share your Christmas by giving to the typhoon and flood victims," Ms Arroyo said in a speech before residents of Barangay Magtanggol in Pateros, during a "Serbisyo Muna Caravan."

The President said Metro Manila had been spared from the devastation of the typhoon which hit Mindoro and Palawan.

She said the typhoon destroyed many bridges, leaving several areas underwater, isolating many barangay and making it harder for authorities to reach flood victims.

But now that the rains had stopped, the President said "the Air Force will conduct air drops by helicopter so relief goods can reach them."

She thanked media outlets for launching separate campaigns to gather relief goods and contributions for flood victims.

Ms Arroyo asked people to send their contributions and relief goods to media outlets, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the National Disaster Coordinating Council in Camp Aguinaldo in Quezon City.

She also announced that the whole of Pateros had now access to water.

Providing water to all barangay in Metro Manila was part of her 10-point program, she said.

And now that the residents had adequate water supply, the President wished them a Merry Christmas and asked them to help the victims of "too much water" in Mindoro and Palawan.

Honest airport porter returns ₱255,000

By Nikko Dizon

A BAGGAGE PORTER BECAME yet another model of honesty at the country's premier international airport after he returned last Tuesday a clutch bag containing money amounting to an estimated P255,000 in cash.

Joel Ricafort, 35, was retrieving used baggage carts from the parking lot of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) Centennial Terminal 2 when he saw a small brown bag left in one of the carts.

The bag contained Y574,000 (P250,000), P5,000, a plane ticket, and a Japanese passport under the name of Takashi Yamada, among other things.

Ricafort immediately turned over the bag to his supervisors and also informed the airport police of his discovery.

Lt. Leonard Longno, officer in charge of the Naia 2 airport police, together with shift officer, Cpl. Ricardo Manalo, investigated the incident and discovered that Yamada was a passenger on Philippine Airlines (PAL) flight PR 431 from Tokyo that arrived at 1:30 p.m. at the Naia.

The airport police called the Japanese Embassy to ask for assistance in locating Yamada.

The embassy was able to trace Yamada through a number found in the bag, and at around 7 p.m. the same day, the Japanese tourist was able to claim his money, valuables, and important documents.

This year, the Naia has witnessed several acts of honesty from several employees, as well as a cab driver who ply the airport area.

They all returned sizeable amounts of money that they found unattended inside the cab, in the airport vicinity, even inside an aircraft.

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See posters for details.

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Per DTI - NCR Permit No. 2004, Series of 2005.

Joint venture on Naia 3 proposed

By Michael Lim Ubac

ADMINISTRATION lawmakers yesterday suggested to Malacañang to explore the viability of a joint venture agreement with the Philippine International Air Terminals Co. (Piatco) to operate Terminal 3 of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport.

Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay Jr., vice chair of the Commission on Appointments, and Manila Rep. Ernesto "Bansai" Nieva, chair of the House committee on people's participation, said the airport facility had been a "white elephant" for quite some time now.

"Government certainly does not want it to become a monument of waste and lost opportunities," said Pichay who called on the government to finally comply with the Supreme Court ruling Tuesday which allowed government to take legal possession of Terminal 3 once it had paid the minimum P3 billion to Piatco.

World class

"The government stands to lose nothing in a joint venture because it will finally be able to operate a world class terminal while not immediately shelling out the P3 billion initial compensation to Piatco. It will also expedite the opening of the world class terminal early next year," said Pichay.

He said a joint venture would also be "advantageous" to Piatco because it would continue to be a stakeholder of Naia 3 until the government was able to fully comply with the compensation.

Nieva, for his part, supported Pichay's proposal for government to strike a most reasonable compromise agreement with Piatco to allow the Terminal 3 opening early next year.

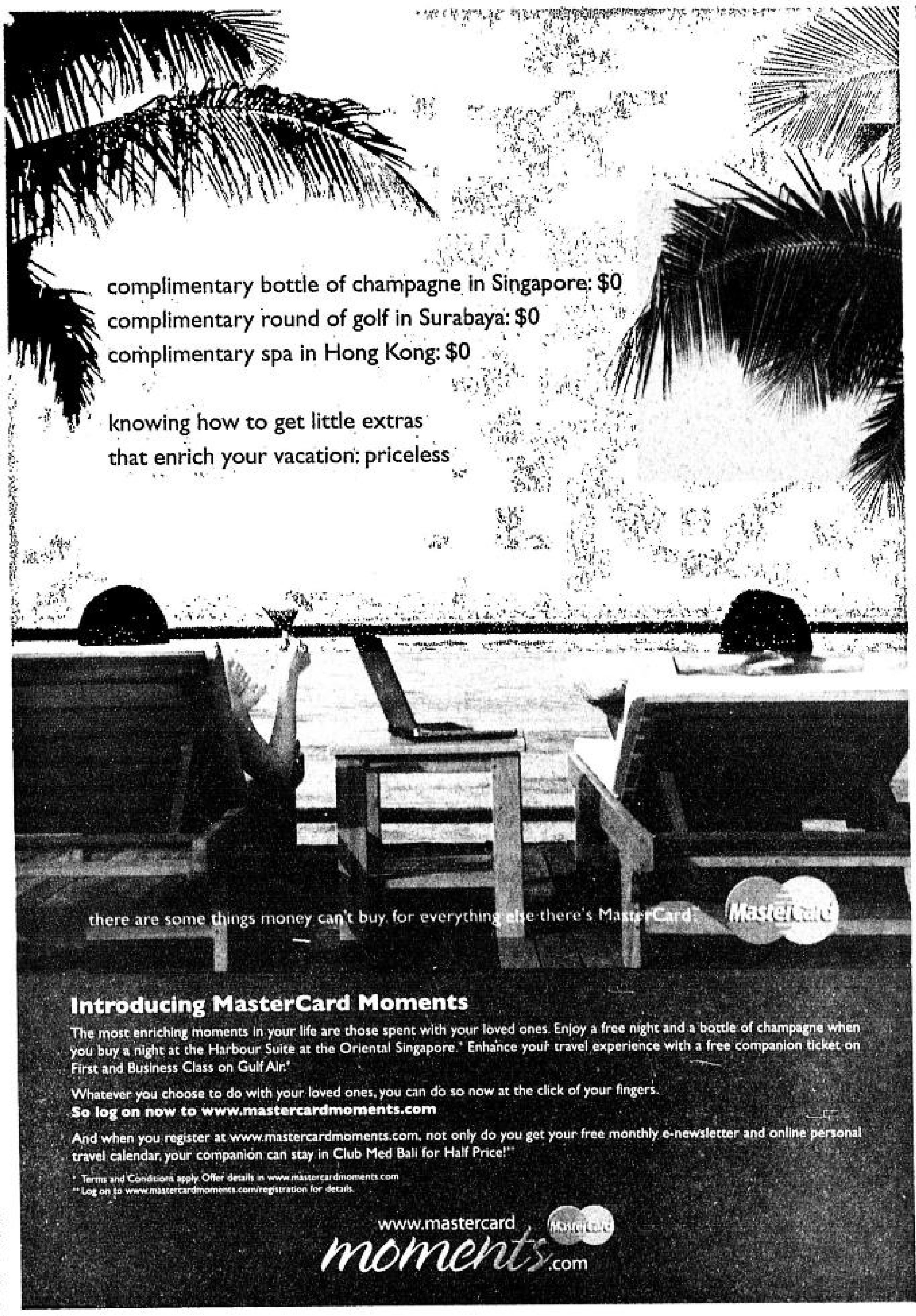
"While we support an opening of Terminal 3 at the soonest possible time, this must be done without the government disregarding its obligations to Piatco as determined by our Supreme Court. The court's decision provided the legal basis for government possession of Naia Terminal 3. Government should take this opportunity to immediately negotiate with Piatco on the payment scheme," said Nieva.

Just and prompt

Pichay said Solicitor General Alfredo Benipayo should not stand in the way of a "just and prompt" resolution of the controversial project.

While Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said Wednesday that "our policy group might opt to pay the (amount) immediately, since the money is already there," Benipayo warned that the Arroyo administration could lose heavily if it paid up before taking over the terminal.

Pichay urged the government to start negotiating with Piatco to come up with a "win-win" agreement for Terminal 3 operations.



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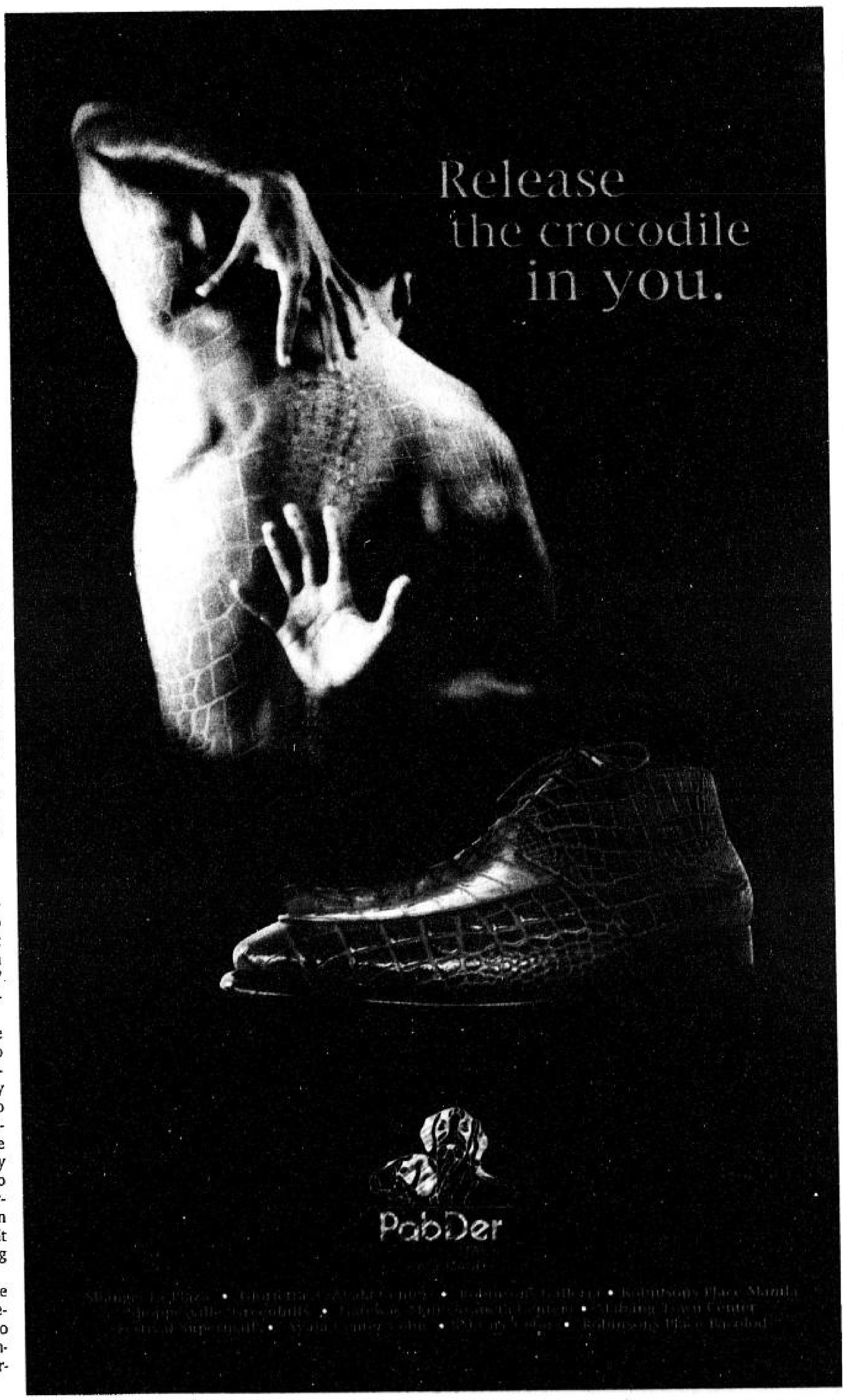

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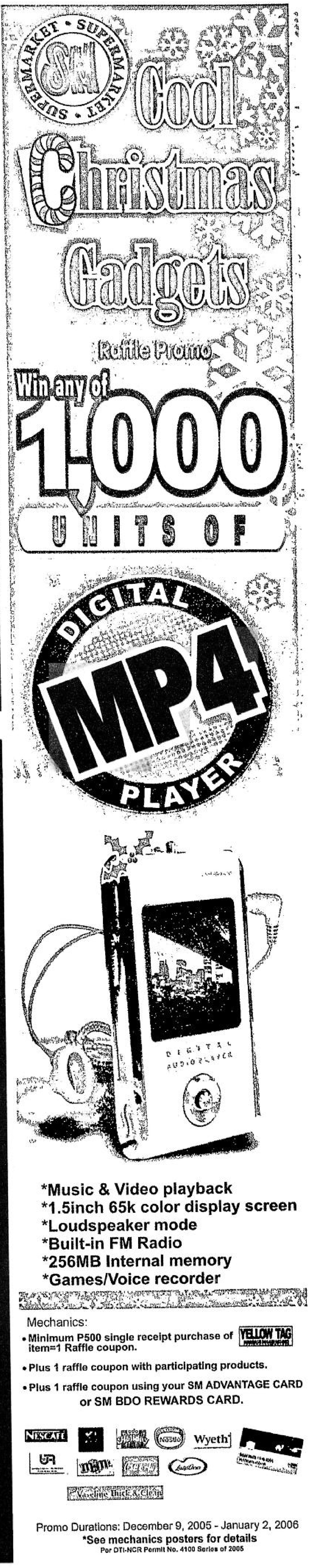

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Yap back in GMA Cabinet

By Christine O. Avendaño and Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-ARROYO appears to be on hiring mode, with two potentially controversial appointments fresh off the burner.

Former Agriculture Secretary Arthur Yap, who has been cleared of tax evasion charges, is back in the Cabinet and holding yet another position once held by Luis "Cito" Lorenzo.

Yap's appointment paper as presidential adviser for job creation, which Ms Arroyo signed on Dec. 16, was released yesterday.

Also yesterday, Ms Arroyo swore in Batangas customs chief Napoleon Morales as the new commissioner of the Bureau of Customs. But Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes, one of her staunchest allies, is not too thrilled about it.

A statement issued by Malacañang said Ms Arroyo created the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Job Creation—a position that holds the rank of Cabinet secretary—when she signed Executive Order No. 475 on Dec. 5.

The new office is expected to consolidate, "for greater purpose," other job generation and food security programs being implemented by various government agencies.

In July 2004, Ms Arroyo created the Office of the Presidential Adviser for Jobs Generation, and named Lorenzo as its head.

She abolished that office on March 3, and transferred its oversight functions to the Presidential Management Staff.

Take 2

Interestingly, Yap, a former student of Ms Arroyo's, replaces Lorenzo in his new post.

He has now replaced Lorenzo in two Cabinet positions—the first time when he took over the agriculture portfolio from the latter on July 9, 2004.

Yap was chair of the National Food Authority before he became agriculture secretary. He quit the latter post on June 30 to face tax evasion charges.

The Bureau of Internal Revenue filed the charges against Yap and his father Domingo Yap for allegedly failing to pay P4 million in real estate taxes in 1997. Father and son were said to have bought a piece of real estate in Pasig City in 1997.

The BIR dismissed the tax evasion charges against the Yaps on Oct. 12.

OIC at Customs

Morales, who joined the BOC in 1968, yesterday took his oath as deputy customs commissioner. But he will also serve as officer in charge of customs in place of Alexander Arevalo.

Malacañang did not explain why Ms Arroyo did not appoint a permanent head of the BOC, one of its main revenue collection agencies.

Morales was customs chief of Batangas when Reyes, then head of the national task force against smuggling and kidnapping, accused him of smuggling.

INQUIRER sources said Reyes openly opposed Morales' appointment as early as last month but that his protests fell on deaf ears because the latter had the backing of top Palace officials.

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves said Morales obtained clearance from the Office of the Ombudsman before he was considered for the BOC post.

The others in the running were BOC lawyer Greg Chavez and former Valenzuela City Rep. Magtanggol Gunigundo.

Arevalo took over the BOC when businessman Alberto Lina joined the "Hyatt 10," a group of key government officials who resigned their posts on July 8 and called on Ms Arroyo to do the same.

A protégé of former President Fidel Ramos, Arevalo failed to meet the monthly collection target set by the Department of Finance.

No radical changes

In a statement issued by the BOC, Morales said he would not make radical changes in the bureau's system.

"There is no need for us now to deliberate and create new laws and processes. The period for policymaking has long been done. We are now in the stage of doing things, of acting together and performing it right," he said.

Earlier, Morales headed the BOC's Valuation Reference Information System, which monitors the valuation and classification of imported goods, particularly motor vehicles. *With a report from Leila B. Salaverria*

Ramos warns GMA on no-polls plan

From page A1

call on Ms Arroyo to state by Jan. 1 her position on the proposed scratching of the 2007 polling. "But the issues are so crucial that any further delay will bring us closer and closer to the brink of economic and political failure."

Speaker Jose de Venecia also distanced himself from the proposal to cancel the 2007 balloting, as part of a transition to the parliamentary system. De Venecia yesterday said that he personally believed that lawmakers, as a general rule and as a matter of principle, "should not benefit from their actions."

'Congress has final say'

Ms Arroyo's political adviser, Gabriel Claudio, said in response to the Ramos statement that the commission position on the 2007 balloting was simply a recommendation to Congress which would decide on the whole package of proposals to shift the country to the parliamentary system.

Claudio said that voting in the commission on the no-election proposal was slim—"perhaps a soft one at that." He said he hoped that lawmakers would be able to make a "prudent and judicious discernment on the issue."

"We are confident that they will assess not only the substance of the recommendations but also the circumstances, rationale and bases behind them," Claudio said.

Lawmakers, he said, would take into account "the propriety and public opinion factor and how a no-election scenario will strengthen or weaken the chances for the approval of the more substantive amendment proposals."

Only a transition mechanism

"The no-election proposal was probably only made as a transition mechanism for the attainment of that objective, the acceptability of which can still be subjected to wider consultations," he added.

Reacting as well to Ramos' opinion, commission chair Jose Abueva merely reiterated that the no-election proposal was included in the Charter change proposals because it was the majority decision.

Abueva said the Concom recommendations were put forward for Congress to scrutinize and hopefully consider.

Ramos has repeatedly said that his support for the President was only incidental and conditional on her willingness to cut short her term and shift the form of government from presidential to parliamentary. In the ANC interview, he indicated that the 2007 elections could resolve the question of Ms Arroyo's legitimacy.

Ms Arroyo, 58, survived an impeachment attempt in the House in September over allegations she manipulated the May 2004 elections.

No meaningful reforms

Ramos said he was disappointed that the constitutional commission's report did not meet his expectations, particularly on his proposals to effect meaningful political and judicial reforms.

He said he had received minutes of the commission's discussions until Dec. 12 when the issues of no election and the extension of term limits had not yet cropped up.

"Let's credit all of the members of the Concom for working so hard. And if that's the majority position so be it," Ramos said.

"But to me there is a mystery during the last 12 hours of the commission. The hasty endorsement to Congress to me smacks of a precooked scenario—those provisions that had to do with keeping people in power without elections."

Ramos challenged the President to make public the final report of the commission.

He said he himself had opposed constitutional change pertaining to the reelection of the President and the lifting of term limits of elected officials when he was still president.

Beholden commission

Ramos also slammed Malacañang's creation of the commission whose members, he said, were appointed by the President and made them beholden to her.

"My proposal was a high commission of leaders, maybe seven to 11 who are experienced, tested, respected leaders of their respective sectors to work parallel with the constituent assembly assuming that the constituent assembly was established beforehand," he said.

Ramos also said he was not imposing his suggestions on the President but was merely stating his opinion as "a senior citizen who had been there."

On retired Gen. Fortunato Abat's arrest for espousing a transitional government to replace the Arroyo administration, Ramos said he respected his classmate and former defense secretary.

But he said the Abat move was a "no-win" solution to the present economic and political turmoil.

"On the other hand, we should expect his actions in terms of waking up people. In that sense, he's making himself a sacrificial lamb which is the character of General Abat and his family. In that sense, he has done something but I don't know if that will contribute to any success to solve the nation's problems," he added. *With reports from Christine O. Avendaño, Michael Lim Ubac and Philip C. Tubeza*

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo chats with her key supporter, former President Fidel V. Ramos, after her 2005 State of the Nation Address. PDI PHOTO

Correction

IN THE DEC. 18 ISSUE, an article and photo caption in the SundayBiz section on Page B1—"Finance's loss is sales and marketing's gain"—misstated the name of the president of DHL Philippines. The correct name of the president of DHL Philippines is Lawrence—not Lorenzo—Llamzon.

* * *

Readers may send their requests for correction of factual errors in writing to the Day Desk, Philippine Daily Inquirer, PDI Building, Chino Roces Avenue corner Mascardo Street, Makati City, fax Nos. 897-47-93/94; e-mail address: daydesk@inquirer.com.ph.

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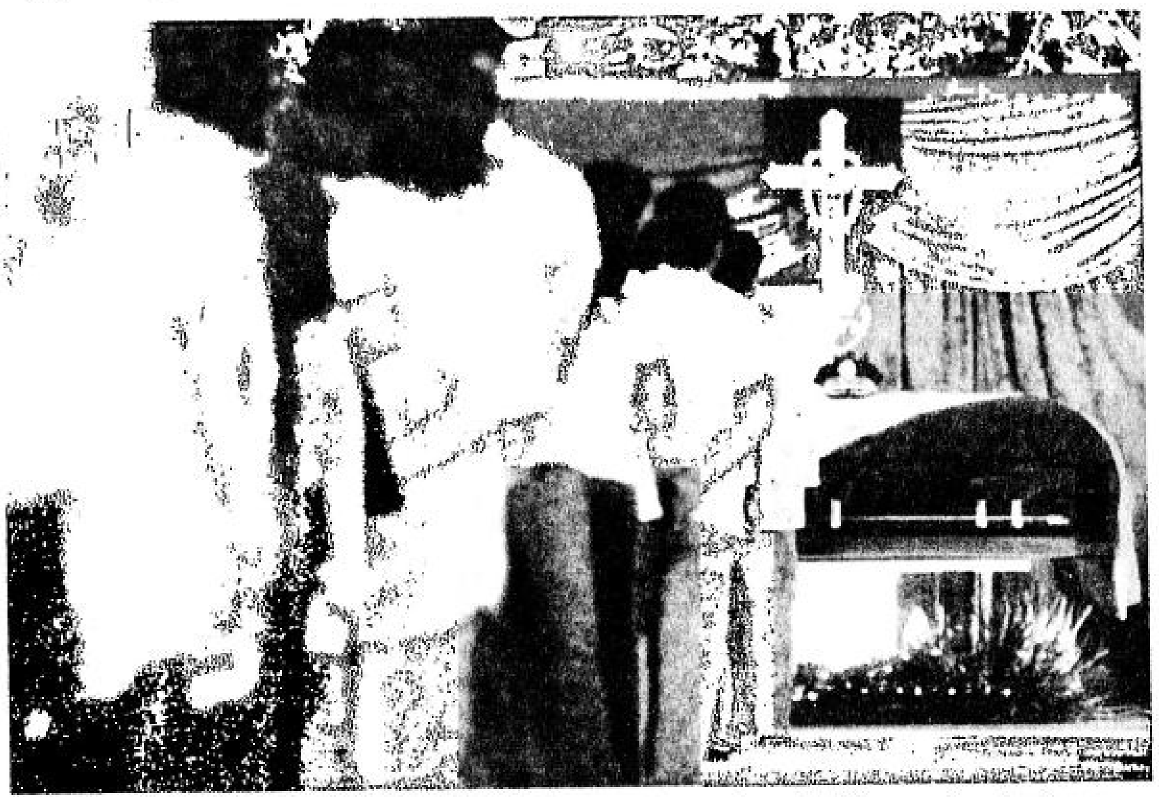
NBI men pay tribute to Wycoco

By Tina G. Santos



NBI EMPLOYEES line up to pay their last respects to NBI Director Reynaldo Wycoco whose body was transferred to the NBI headquarters in Manila. Wycoco will be buried at the Libingan ng mga Bayani tomorrow.

REM ZAMORA

WHILE SOME EMPLOYEES HELD a Christmas party elsewhere, moans of grief rang out as the chestnut-colored casket bearing the remains of Director Reynaldo Wycoco arrived at the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) office yesterday.

Most employees took a time off from their work and lined up at the NBI grounds to welcome their boss, whose remains arrived at the bureau around 10:30 a.m. Officials, meanwhile, wore black armbands as a sign of their mourning.

They also took turns in holding vigil at the late director's wake.

Wycoco, a former police general and a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy (PMA), looked very inch a gentleman in his military uniform. Wreaths from relatives and different government offices overflowed the NBI gymnasium.

"He was soft-spoken, he never got angry. He left a legacy of good leadership," said Romulo Asis, chief of the bureau's Anti-Human Trafficking Division.

Most of the employees said the late director was very supportive of measures initiated for their welfare.

"He was a good boss, we'll surely miss him," they said.

A military burial at the Libingan ng mga Bayani will be accorded to Wycoco following a Mass tomorrow morning.

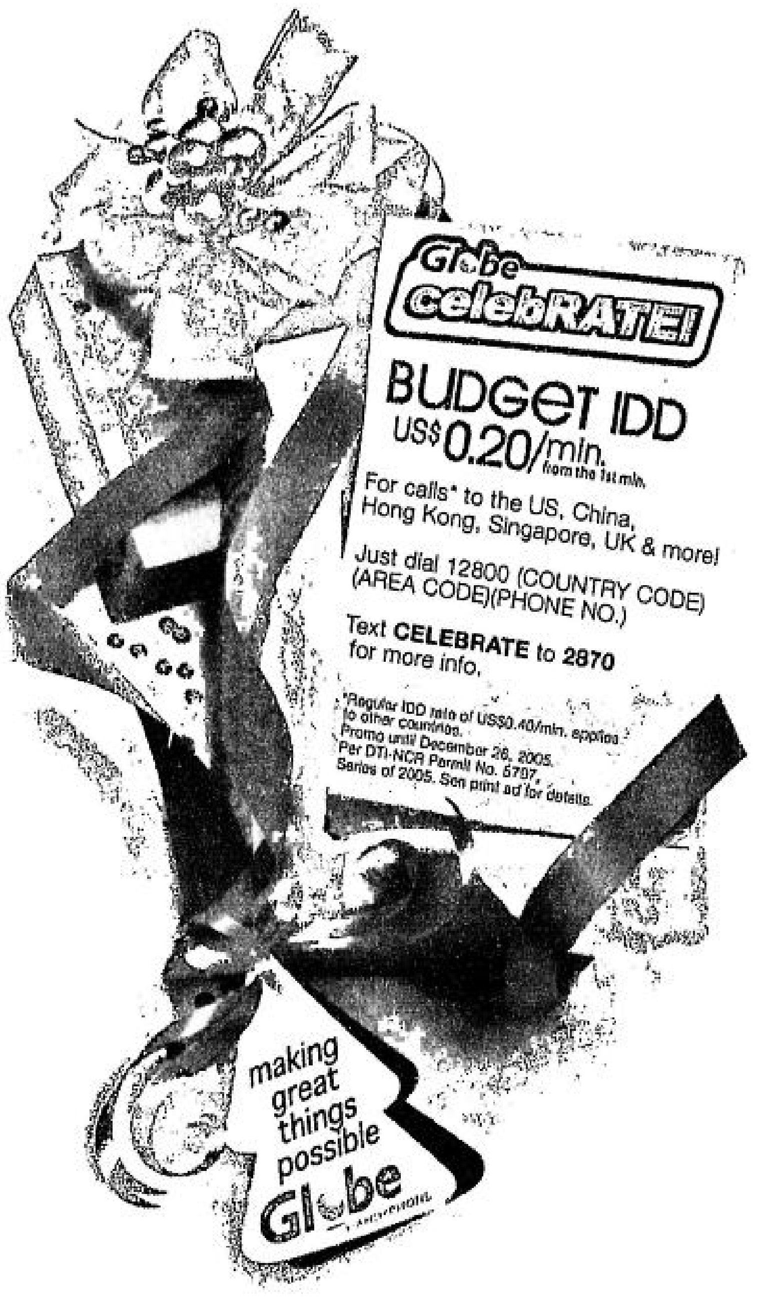
Last night, the Association of the Harvard University graduates offered necrological services for the late director. Another service is expected this afternoon by NBI officials and employees.

Wycoco's death came 26 days after he suffered a massive stroke and slipped into a deep coma.

He joined the NBI on Jan. 23, 2001 and was credited with several improvements in the bureau including the transfer of NBI clearance facilities to its new location in Carriedo, as well as innovations in the clearance system like the establishment of clearance renewal kiosks and the clearance-on-wheels project.

Prior to his appointment as bureau director, Wycoco had served as the Philippine National Police's second in command as deputy director general—the military's equivalent to three-star general.

After his graduation from the military in 1968, Wycoco was designated as PNP Regional Director for Region I, Director for Police Community Relations, Defense Attache in the United Kingdom, Armed Forces of the Philippines Command and General Staff College instructor and AFP and PNP spokesperson.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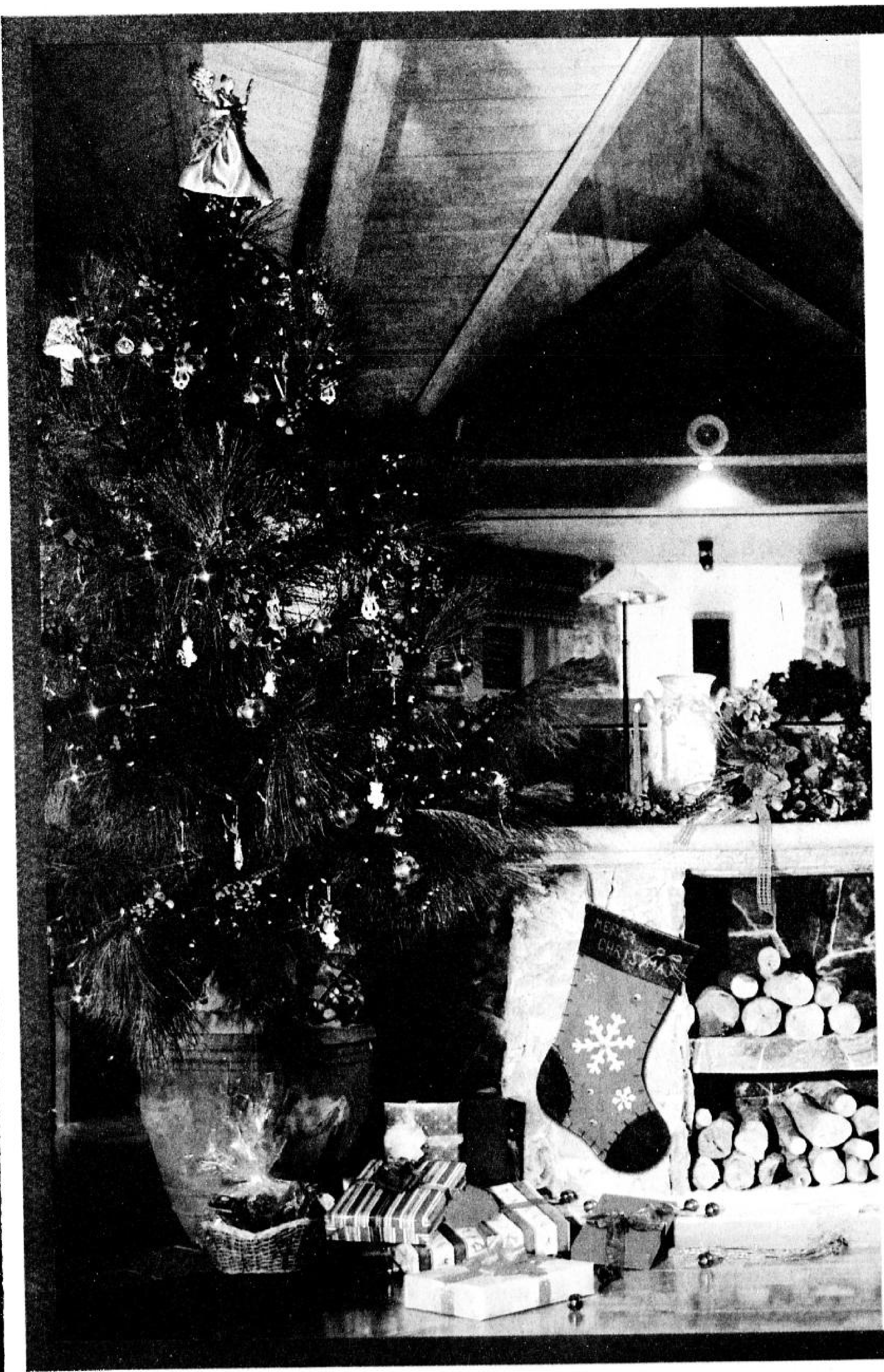
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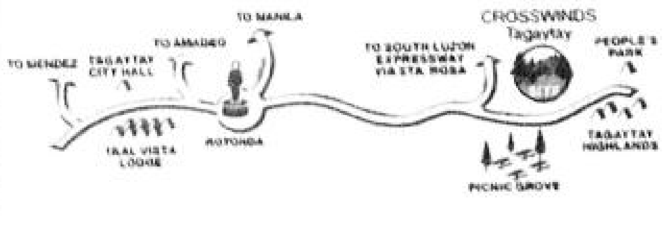

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SC to veer away from policy of intervention

IN THE KNOW

SC interventions in business

By Cyril L. Bonabente
PDI Research

THERE WERE AT LEAST SIX INTERVENTIONS by the Davide court on business issues and in all questions the newly appointed Chief Justice voted with the majority, except in the Manila Hotel case.

Sale of Manila Hotel. The high court overturned in 1997 a government decision to sell the Manila Hotel to a Malaysian business group. The court maintained the sale had violated the "Filipino First" mandate of the Constitution.

Oil deregulation. Voting 9-2 with one abstention, the Supreme Court in 1997 declared Republic Act No. 8180 unconstitutional because it inhibited fair competition, encouraged monopoly and interfered with market forces. The three provisions found objectionable by the Supreme Court pertained to the imposition of a 4-percent tariff on imports for new oil firms, the requirement of a four-day inventory for new players and the prohibition on predatory pricing.

Because of this decision, then Budget Secretary Salvador Enriquez Jr. said the nine Supreme Court justices who voted against the oil deregulation law should be impeached for "infringing on executive function and meddling on economic policy." But Enriquez was flayed for his impeachment call by some members of Congress. Congress later passed a replacement law.

Jancom deal. On Jan. 30, 2002, the Supreme Court ruled that the $350-million incineration agreement between the government and Jancom Environmental Corp. was valid but repeated its stand that the controversial contract needed the President's signature to become effective.

In ruling on the validity of the contract, which the Regional Trial Court and then the Court of Appeals had previously upheld, the Supreme Court also stressed an earlier ruling that incinerators are illegal under the Clean Air Act only if they emit toxic and poisonous fumes.

The MMDA had contested the validity of the contract, claiming that it never got through the negotiation stage since the notice sent by then MMDA Chair Prospero Oreta informing Jancom that it was the winning bidder specifically provided that the (contract) was subject to negotiation.

Piatco contracts. Voting 10-3 in May 2003, the high court declared null and void all five contracts awarded to Philippine International Air Terminals Co. for the construction of the Ninoy Aquino International Airport's Terminal 3.

The Supreme Court said all the Piatco contracts were contrary to public policy and violative of the build-operate-transfer (BOT) law. It said the government should choose to take over the project because of the violations but it's obligated to pay "reasonable cost" for the use of the terminal and or terminal complex.

"In sum, this court rules that in view of the absence of the requisite financial capacity of the Paircargo consortium, predecessor of respondent Piatco, the award by the Pre-qualification, Bids and Awards Committee of the contract for the construction, operation and maintenance of the Naia III is null and void," the high tribunal said.

PEA-Amari deal. In 2003, the Supreme Court voided the joint-venture agreement between the Public Estate Authority (PEA) and Amari Coastal Bay and Development Corp. It said the state could not sell the coastline to anybody, whether local or foreign or extraterrestrial.

Comelec modernization. The Supreme Court scrapped in January 2004 the controversial P1.3-billion contract between the Commission on Elections and Mega Pacific eSolutions (MPEI) for automated polls after it found that the Comelec violated the law and its own bidding rules when it awarded the contract. The high court also ordered the Ombudsman to investigate the criminal liability of those involved, and the solicitor general to recover the P849,167,697.41 that had already been spent for the project.

The court voted 9-3-2, with three justices dissenting and two asking for more time. This marks the second time the high court voided an election modernization contract, after the P6-billion contract for voters' registration awarded to the Photokina group was nullified in September 2002.

"Though the Philippines needs an automated electoral process, it cannot accept just any system shoved into its bosom through improper and illegal methods. As the saying goes, the end never justifies the means. Penumbral contracting will not produce enlightened results," wrote Associate Justice Artemio Panganiban, the decision's *ponente*.

From page A1

guard the liberty of the people and to nurture their prosperity and in case of doubt, I will always resolve the doubt in favor of the liberty of our people."

He said there would be two standards in looking at issues—"strictly in favor of the people in terms of their constitutional right and their human right, and in favor of the government to open the doors of prosperity for our people."

Not experts in economics

"Judges are not experts" in matters of financial and economic policies, he said, and they had better leave them to the "policy makers."

"These are what we call in law political questions, questions that are addressed to the relationship of the elected members of our officials and the people, those questions are to be judged by the people and not the judiciary," Panganiban said.

He said congressmen and senators "who make these policies will be answerable to the people and if the people don't want their policies, they will elect a new set of officials that will probably change their policies."

The 69-year-old Panganiban denied criticisms that his appointment had been an offshoot of the so-called revolving door policy and asked people to give him the "opportunity to prove my worth as the Chief Justice of this country before I am either praised or criticized."

"I do not know that there is even such a policy," he said, referring to the practice in the Armed Forces of appointing retiring generals to serve brief terms as chiefs of staff. Critics said this was the main reason reforms had not taken root in the military.

He also denied being close to President Macapagal-Arroyo and vowed to maintain the court's independence.

PANGANIBAN: Judges are not experts in financial and economic policies.
REM ZAMORA

Puno hurt but stays on

Associate Justice Reynato S. Puno yesterday admitted he had been "hurt" by Ms Arroyo's move bypassing him in favor of Panganiban.

"Indeed, even pain has a purpose," Puno said as he asked everyone to respect the President's "exclusive constitutional power of appointment."

"The Almighty has a plan for all of us and I agree that the All Seeing Eye does not play dice with our destinies," said Puno, the most senior among three justices recommended for the post by the Judicial and Bar Council.

In a statement, Puno brushed aside "rumors" that he was eyeing an early retirement, adding: "Those who desire to reduce me to posthumous significance will not experience any ecstasy."

He pledged to be "an independent-minded jurist, regardless of the consequence" and to "fight for the civil liberties of the people against abuses coming from any and all sources."

Puno's statement was read by a staff member who, like all others working in Puno's office, wore black.

Controversial jurist

Panganiban has courted controversy since January 2001 when he supported Ms Arroyo, then the Vice President, as she assumed leadership of the country after President Joseph Estrada was forced to step down by massive anticorruption protests.

Estrada claimed he was the victim of a conspiracy by the elite, a section of the military that broke away from him, Roman Catholic Church leaders, and some members of the Supreme Court—a politically independent body which later ruled that Ms Arroyo was the country's legal President.

Since then, Panganiban has been dogged by opposition allegations that he is close to Ms Arroyo, suggesting political bias. He denies the allegations and has expressed surprise at his appointment as Chief Justice.

The Supreme Court has still to rule on the constitutionality of controversial moves by the President to restrict political rallies, create a commission to recommend amendments to the Constitution, and prevent officials from testifying in Congress without her permission. *With a report from AP*

Meralco assailed for pass-on bid

From page A1

from Napocor whether it used it or not.

Until a final settlement of the dispute has been approved by the ERC, Del Callar said the government could still press its collection of the P42 billion in unpaid power bills.

Meralco, however, said it entered into a P20-billion settlement agreement with Napocor in July 2003. Early this year, the Lopez-owned firm filed a petition with the ERC to bring down the amount of unpaid power bills to Napocor to P14.3 billion.

Nasecore petition

On Dec. 22, Ilagan's Nasecore filed an urgent motion with the ERC amending its position on the ongoing arbitrage case between Napocor and Meralco after Malacañang expressed its desire to collect the entire P42 billion from the utility firm—and not just the P20 billion stipulated in the settlement agreement.

But Nasecore maintained its position that Meralco's decision not to honor its supply contract with Napocor and buy more expensive power from Lopez-owned independent power producers was its own judgment call.

"Any business decision has its own risks, advantages and disadvantages. It is but natural that Meralco, which made that sole decision, should be the one to suffer the consequences of its own management's decision and this should not be passed on to its captive customers," Nasecore said in its arguments submitted to the ERC.

Meralco claimed that the debt was not a penalty but "compensation" to Napocor for the fixed cost component of the generation cost arising from unused power supply in the contract.

But Nasecore noted that Meralco's 2002 and 2003 annual reports called these debts as penalties and that Meralco officials vehemently objected having the debt labeled as a penalty in the hearings.

Enrile

In his program on dzAR radio, Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile said that even less than average lawyers should know that Napocor's supply contract was binding even with ongoing negotiations between Napocor and Meralco for a settlement.

"The contract between Napocor and Meralco for a take or pay is valid while negotiations for new terms are in progress. It can only be rescinded if a new one has been agreed upon by both parties and that both parties have agreed that it should replace the old contract," Enrile said in the radio interview.

Meralco has branded as "irresponsible" INQUIRER reports that Malacañang was studying the conversion of Meralco's debt into equity to take over the firm.

"There is no provision in the agreement for conversion to equity of Meralco of any amount to be paid to Napocor," the Meralco board said in a separate statement.

Opposition Rep. Rolex Suplico (Iloilo) said the government plan to take over Meralco as an attempt by the Arroyo administration to get favorable news coverage from the Lopez-owned ABS-CBN media empire.

"[The administration's] motive is highly questionable, as this seems to be a cheap attempt to blackmail the Lopezes and castrate ABS-CBN. It is ill-timed and ill-advised," he said.

Ermita on Wednesday said there were nothing political in the government move to collect the P42 billion from Meralco. *With a report from Philip C. Tubeza*

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GIs in Subic rape case challenge woman's arguments

By Tonette Orejas
PDI Central Luzon Desk

THE LAWYERS OF two of six American soldiers accused of raping a Filipina have questioned the inclusion of new evidence in the woman's final arguments, urging prosecutors in Olongapo City not to consider these in resolving the case.

In a manifestation filed on Wednesday, the lawyers of Corporal Corey Burris and Lance Corporal Albert Lara cited six "new factual matters" in the woman's Dec. 19 memorandum and which were not in her Nov. 2 sworn affidavit.

These included the mention of the woman as being a graduate of management accounting at the Ateneo de Davao University, the invitation extended to her and her sibling by United States serviceman Carlos Ocasio to the Subic Bay Freeport, and the mention of her drinking "alcoholic drinks."

'Forced to join'

The manifestation also cited accounts of what a US serviceman, identified as "Gerald" or "Genard," did to the woman while at the dance floor of the Neptune Bar and Restaurant, and the woman's asking for an identification card from that man.

The woman said it was at Neptune Bar where she was forced to join the soldiers in their van that was driven by Filipino Timoteo Soriano Jr.

Lawyers Jose Justiniano, Emmanuel Peña Jr., Aris Gulapa and Carlito Zaragoza, who are representing Burris and Lara, said four more new allegations were included in the woman's arguments. The lawyers, however, did not elaborate on these allegations.

They also questioned the use of the US Naval Criminal Investigative Service report on its interrogation of Lance Corporal Daniel Smith, the serviceman identified to have raped the 22-year-old woman.

'Inadmissible'

The NCIS report, they said, was not part of the case's record because it was not submitted to Prosecutor Prudencio Jalandoni.

Jalandoni earlier said he received the report in the third week of November and turned this over to Chief State Prosecutor Jovencito Zuño.

Justiniano clarified they were not asking Jalandoni to reject the entire memorandum of the woman.

Citing the rules of court on evidence, the lawyers told Jalandoni that the new matters were "inadmissible."

Sought for reactions, lawyer Minerva Ambrosio, one of the woman's lead counsels, said: "It's their right [to file a manifestation]. But everything is now the call of Prosecutor Jalandoni."

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INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The *National Food Authority Region 10*, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites Grains Cargo Handling Service Contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for handling the movement of grains, stocks in the warehouses and to load/unload to/from trucks said commodities with an Approved Budget for the Contract (ABC) for the year 2006 as follows:

LOT NO.	PROVINCE	LOCATION OF WAREHOUSES	ESTIMATED VOLUME (BAGS)	APPROVED BUDGET FOR THE CONTRACT (ABC)
1	BUKIDNON	WAO, LANAO SUR, KALILANGAN, MARAMAG, VALENCIA, AGLAYAN	168,000	P 623,000.00
2	CAMIGUIN	MAMBAJAO	222,000	P 777,000.00
3	LANAO NORTE	ILIGAN CITY and LALA	333,700	P 1,171,450.00
4	MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL	OZAMIS CITY	351,000	P 1,253,000.00
5	MISAMIS ORIENTAL	CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY and GINGOOG CITY	1,666,300	P 3,646,300.00

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding, and have key personnel and equipment (owned) available for the prosecution of the project. The list of minimum equipment requirement is indicated in the Eligibility Forms. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids, shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

ACTIVITIES	ADDRESS	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	2F, NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	December 19-29, 2005	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM Working Days
2. Pre-Bid Conference	Conference Room 2F NFA-10 Regional Office Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	January 6, 2006	1:30 PM
3. Deadline for Submission & Receipt of Eligibility Requirements & Bid Documents	Conference Room 2F NFA-10 Regional Office Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	January 17, 2006	1:30 PM
4. Opening of Bids	Conference Room, 2F NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	January 17, 2006	1:35 PM

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Two Thousand Pesos Only (P 2,000.00) per contract to the Cashier of the National Food Authority-Cagayan de Oro City.

The National Food Authority, Region 10 assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

The *National Food Authority, Region 10* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the Bidders.

(Sgd.) CAMILO D. MAGTRAYO
BAC Chairman

(PDI - Dec. 16 & 23, 2005)

More hacienda farmers want stock option deals scrapped

By Blanche S. Rivera

FARMERS IN NINE HACIENDAS COVERED by the stock distribution option in Negros Occidental are moving to give up their stocks and acquire the lands, taking their cue from the Cojuangco-owned Hacienda Luisita, which was recently awarded to thousands of farm workers.

The 170-ha SVJ Farms Inc. in Talisay and the 438-ha Negros Industrial By-Products and Processing Inc. in La Carlota have petitions for revocation pending before the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council.

The 174-ha Wuhtrich Hermanos Inc. in Calatrava and six other haciendas belonging to lawyer Arsenio Al. Acuña will file petitions for the cancellation of their SDOs early January, said Peace Foundation's Danny Carranza, who met the farm worker beneficiaries early this month.

"There is a popular sentiment that their SDOs can be scrapped because of the same reasons as Luisita," he said in a press briefing yesterday.

Carranza, who did an extensive study of Hacienda Luisita in the 1990s, is also studying the ten SDO areas in Negros. The province has 10 of the 13 stock schemes approved by the PARC as the landowners' way of complying with the RA 6657 or the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law.

"Like the farmers of Luisita, their lives are miserable. But unlike Luisita [beneficiaries], they were not harassed into approving the SDO. They really believed in the promises, but they don't have it now," Carranza said.

The PARC, the highest governing body on agrarian reform in the country, voted on Tuesday to cancel the stock scheme that has been in effect at the 4,915-ha Hacienda Luisita in Tarlac for the past 16 years.

Carranza said a petition for revocation of the SDO in the Acuña haciendas was already going around for signature of the beneficiaries. Majority of the farm workers were eager to own the lands instead of company shares.

Farmers from the Ledesma Hermanos Agricultural Corp. in San Carlos City were not able to join the meeting and were unlikely to be able to work for a revocation because they were intimidated by the landowners, Carranza said.

The petitions for revocation would be submitted to the provincial agrarian reform officer, who will investigate the alleged violations of the SDO contracts.

The PARO will submit his report to the regional director of the Department of Agrarian Reform, who will then forward it to the secretary. The DAR chief can either conduct an independent investigation or immediately endorse the revocation to the PARC.

"They will file the petition early January because they don't want to risk whatever Christmas benefits they may receive from the company," Carranza said of the farmer beneficiaries.

RP's foreign debt dips to $55.5B

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE COUNTRY'S FOREIGN DEBTS declined by 1 percent to $55.5 billion at end-September from a quarter ago due to the depreciation of the Japanese yen against the US dollar and increase in residents' investments in Philippine debt papers.

The Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas reported yesterday that the total external debt stock—which is dominated by public sector borrowings—also eased by a marginal 0.2 percent from $55.6 billion a year ago.

External liabilities of the public sector represented 67.9 percent of total, while the rest consisted of private obligations.

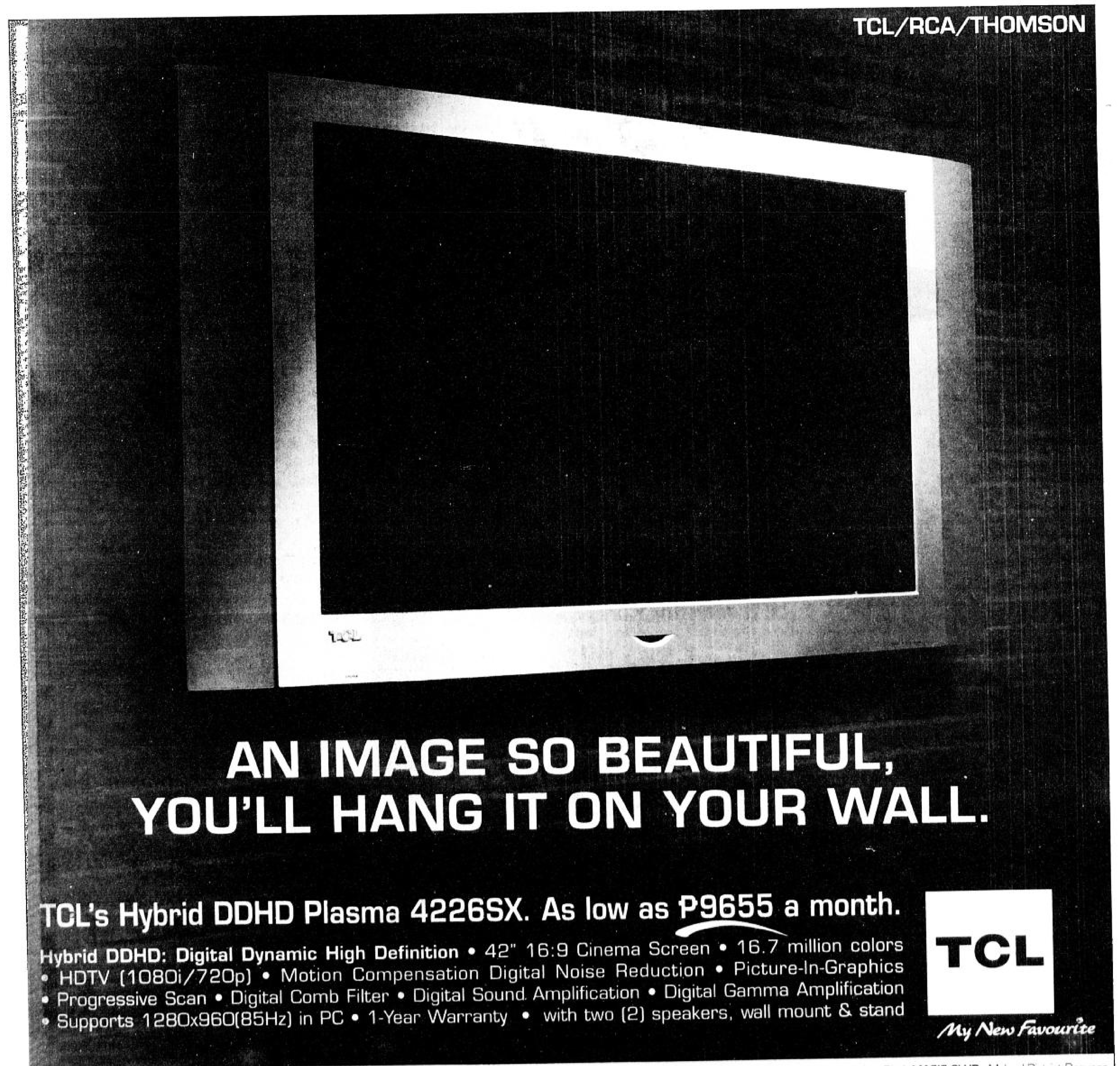
BSP Gov. Amando Tetangco Jr. said: "A moderate yet steady decline of public sector share to total external debt has been observed during the past four quarters, from 69.1 percent in December 2004 to 68.8 percent in March 2005 and 68.2 percent in June."

The country's external debt ratio to gross national product was about 55.5 percent at end-September, an improvement of 4.8 percentage points over the 60.3 percent level a year ago, he noted.

"This reflected the strengthened position of the country to pay maturing obligations on a continuing basis," Tetangco said.

He added that the decline in the debt stock during the third quarter resulted largely from negative foreign exchange revaluation adjustment as the US dollar appreciated versus the Japanese yen as well as from increased investments by locals in Philippine debt papers.

When the government or some private companies issue offshore bonds, the portion bought by local investors is excluded from the foreign debt stock. An increase in residents' investments in Philippine foreign debt papers thus reduces the total external debt.



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CHRISTMAS CHEERS
Children with cancer and their parents are greeted by beauty guru Ricky Reyes at the Munting Paraiso cancer ward of the Philippine General Hospital Cancer Institute where they held their Christmas party recently. Reyes adopted the cancer ward nine years ago to help the young cancer patients with medicine, food and cash donation from good-hearted donors.

Sandigan: No extension for Erap's holiday leaves

By Nelson F. Flores

THE SANDIGANBAYAN SPECIAL DIVISION yesterday denied for lack of merit the motion of former President Joseph Estrada seeking a modification in the court order that allowed him to leave his sprawling detention center in Tanay, Rizal, and spend Christmas and New Year with his centenarian mother.

The Special Division, in rejecting Estrada's motion, said the court already arrived "at what it considered as the most reasonable arrangement primarily taking into consideration the age and condition of the mother of the former President and our time-honored tradition during Christmas season. In view thereof, the court finds no cogent reason to amend the Order dated Dec. 14, 2005."

Earlier, the Special Division allowed Estrada to leave his detention center at 5 p.m. on Dec. 24 and proceed to wherever his mother, Doña Mary Ejercito, would be and stay with her up to 5 p.m. on Christmas day. A similar time frame was adopted by the court when it allowed the ex-President to leave Tanay on Dec. 31, also to visit his mother.

However, Estrada, through his lawyer former Sen. Rene Saguisag, last Monday asked the anti-graft court's Special Division to extend his Christmas and New Year's passes by 14 hours each.

Saguisag explained that all Estrada is asking for is to be allowed to stay with his ailing mother until 7 a.m. on Dec. 26 and on Jan. 2, 2006.

Estrada is detained in his Tanay rest house due to the plunder and perjury charges filed by the government.

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Running priest banished anew

By Christian V. Esguerra

ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST vocal clergymen has been banished from his parish, the second time in two years.

Fr. Robert Reyes, a constant critic of the Church hierarchy's position on political issues, has been asked to leave the Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Parish in Project 4, Quezon City, effective Jan. 15, the INQUIRER has learned.

Cubao Bishop Honesto Ongtioco had told the maverick running priest to "take a sabbatical," which is said to be a euphemism to get rid of an unwanted subordinate.

Ongtioco, known to be a strict disciplinarian among his peers, earlier announced his decision during Mass at the Immaculate Concepcion Cathedral in Cubao last Dec. 8, according to a highly reliable source.

The INQUIRER kept calling the bishop's office yesterday but got no reply.

Sought for comment, Reyes didn't seem bothered by the decision.

All packed up

"It doesn't mean that it would keep me from being what I am and from doing what I want," he told the INQUIRER on Wednesday night.

He said he had finished packing up and had already left the parish.

No other reason was given to justify the move, according to the INQUIRER source who described it as "strange" considering that it's usually priests who seek a sabbatical.

Just two years ago, Reyes was moved out of the more prominent Parish of the Holy Sacrifice on the University of the Philippines campus in Diliman to the more obscure location in Project 4.

Observers then believed the transfer was meant to temper Reyes who had been very vocal on political issues.

But it apparently didn't keep him from campaigning against corruption and other scandals in government, including President Macapagal-Arroyo's alleged manipulation of the 2004 election.

Reyes acknowledged that detractors might claim that he was banished simply because his involvement in political issues had been keeping him from his duties in his parish.

But he maintained that he still diligently said Mass at this parish every 6 a.m. daily even while he was fasting for a total of 162 days at the People Power Monument on Edsa.

"I never reneged on my responsibilities in my parish," he said.

Reyes went on fasting under the tent he dubbed "Kubol Pag-Asa," saying he would stay on until Ms Arroyo was ousted.

'Virtual parish'

Last Sunday, he packed up and created a "virtual parish," ostensibly in response to his banishment from Project 4. The site, www.bukal.com/kubol, is set to be launched on Christmas Day.

He said it would be his way of ventilating his own views on social and political issues which have often run against those of the Catholic hierarchy.

But he made clear that he was not dissociating himself from the Church.

"I see a lack of dynamism and perhaps, insight, into the social realities in the position of the Church," he said.

Reyes' Internet-based parish was inspired by Partenia, the "online diocese" put up in 1996 by French Bishop Jacques Gaillot.

Partenia was named after the former diocese in present-day Algeria that no longer exists. It's acknowledged as a symbol for people who feel isolated from society or the Church.

Gaillot, 69, started his "diocese without borders" after the Vatican dispelled him as bishop of Evreux the year before because of long-running conflicts on pastoral issues.

Gaillot is a strong critic of the Gulf War and a champion of human rights activists, abused im migrants, and political prisoners. He also openly embraced the possibility of allowing married men to be ordained priests.

Like the French bishop, Reyes is no fan of many of his superiors' positions and actions on issues such as the "Hello Garci" scandal.

He criticized some bishops for accepting hefty donations sourced from casinos.

He also slammed Davao Archbishop Fernando Capalla, the former president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines, when the prelate called for national reconciliation. He thought Capalla's appeal merely echoed Ms Arroyo's tired tactic in the face of criticism.

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The WORLD

Editor **Luverne B. Gueco**

Saddam claims torture by US

BAGHDAD—SADDAM HUSSEIN TOLD HIS TRIAL on Wednesday he was beaten in US custody and, in an extraordinary outburst towards the end of the hearing, also said those who had tortured Iraqis should be punished for their crimes.

The former Iraqi president spent most of the session sitting quietly in the defendants' dock as prosecution witnesses told the court of the beatings and abuse they and other former detainees say they suffered in Saddam's jails.

But late in the hearing, the man who ruled Iraq for a quarter of a century rose to his feet and told the judge he had been abused by US forces since his arrest in late 2003.

"I have been hit by the Americans and tortured," he said, speaking purposefully. "I have been beaten on every place of my body, and the signs are all over my body."

Then, in one of the more conciliatory statements he has made during the trial, he said those guilty of the alleged torture described by the witnesses should be punished, apparently distancing himself from the accusations.

"When I hear that any Iraqi has been hurt it hurts me too," the 68-year-old said. "The wrongs that were done to those people were wrong and, according to law, those who did it should get what they deserve."

In Washington, the White House dismissed Saddam's allegation he was tortured in US custody as preposterous.

"That's one of the most preposterous things I've heard from Saddam Hussein recently," spokesperson Scott McClellan said.

"Saddam Hussein is being treated the exact opposite of the way his regime treated those he imprisoned and tortured simply for expressing their opinions. And so I reject that."

State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack described the allegation as "highly ironic."

"Look, he's been given to grandstanding in this trial, but where the focus should be is on the testimony of those people who were victimized ..." he told reporters.

"That's what people should be listening to."

The court heard from three witnesses who made some of the most coherent, specific and at times chilling allegations yet against Saddam's followers.

One witness told the court how guards in Saddam's intelligence service heated up plastic tubing and allowed the hot plastic to drip on to the bodies of victims.

A second said he was given electric shocks. While he screamed in agony in the torture chamber at the headquarters of the intelligence service in Baghdad, Saddam's half-brother and former intelligence chief Barzan Ibrahim al-Tikriti ate grapes and watched, the witness said.

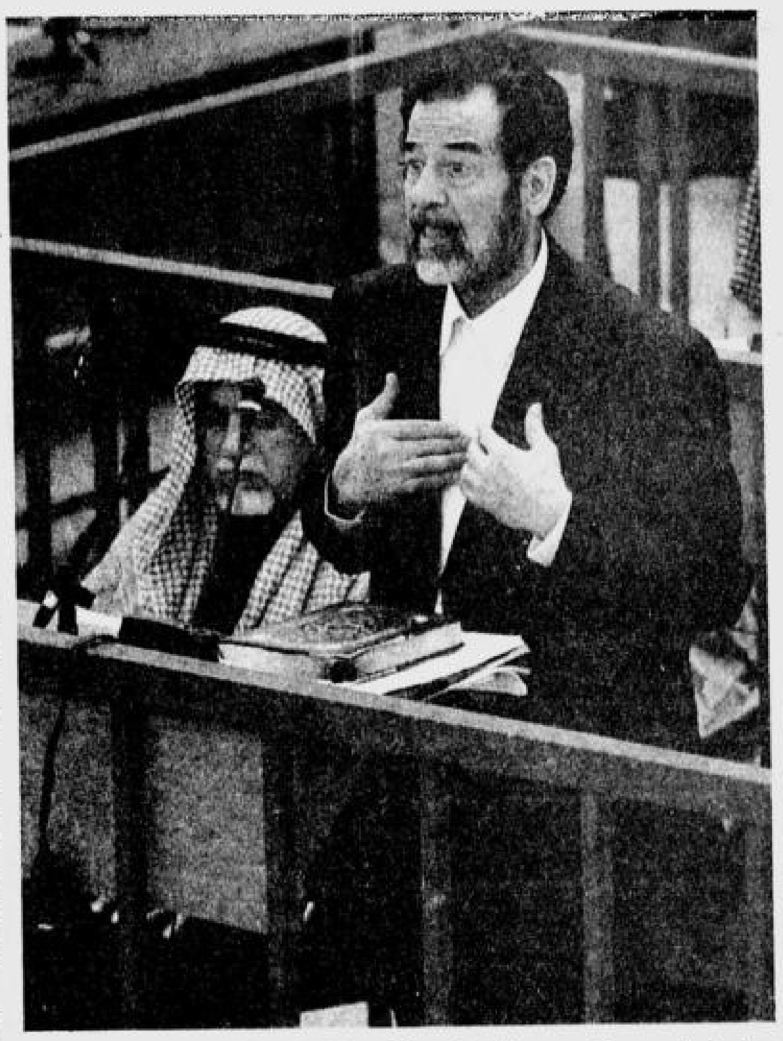
The third witness, who, like the second, spoke from behind a curtain to hide his identity, said Saddam's guards attached electrodes to his hands, feet and penis and gave him electric shocks before pulling out his fingernails and toenails.

Saddam and seven co-defendants including Barzan are charged with crimes against humanity relating to the killing of 148 people from the mainly Shiite village of Dujail, north of Baghdad, in the 1980s.

Prosecutors say Saddam ordered the killings in reprisal for a failed bid to assassinate him in the village in 1982. Scores of families from Dujail were rounded up and shunted between jails around Iraq for four years after the attack.

While previous witnesses have given sometimes rambling and generalized accounts of their hardships under Saddam, the first witness on Wednesday, Ali Hassan al-Haidari, was precise.

Reuters



FORMER Iraqi President Saddam Hussein addresses the court during the resumption of his trial on Dec. 21 in Baghdad, Iraq. Saddam and seven co-defendants are on trial in the deaths of more than 140 Shiites following a 1982 assassination attempt against him in the town of Dujail, north of Baghdad. AP

Brazil opens files on dirty war

BRASILIA, BRAZIL—BRAZIL RELEASED files on dissidents compiled during the 1964-'85 military dictatorship on Wednesday, but a human rights group accused the government of withholding sensitive information on torture and killing.

Millions of pages of previously secret documents, photographs, films and pamphlets from the intelligence service were transferred to the National Archive, where declassified items can be viewed on request.

The move followed pressure from international watchdogs and torture victims to provide information on those missing or killed during the military regime's "dirty war" against political opponents.

Cabinet chief Dilma Rousseff, a former guerrilla fighter and political prisoner, said opening the files would bolster democracy and lead to a better understanding of history.

"Society needs to ask itself why Brazilians pursued other Brazilians, with many imprisoned, tortured and killed," she told reporters.

But a human rights campaigner said the government failed to make public vital documents.

"The files say nothing about torture, killings, disappearances, or burials," said Cecilia Coimbra, a leader of the rights group Torture Never Again. "The government knows the whereabouts of the really secret documents and is not handing them out."

Reuters

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Why has Bin Laden been silent for a year?

By Habib Trabelsi

PARIS—HE HAS NOT ISSUED ANY public statement all year. Speculation has grown over his influence, health and even possible death. Where is the Western world's most wanted man, Osama Bin Laden?

The al-Qaida leader's period of silence is the longest since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, offering no clues to the whereabouts or fate of a man who this year appears to have quietly slipped off the radar.

Bin Laden has not been heard of since a Dec. 27, 2004 audiotape in which he anointed Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, Iraq's most wanted man, as al-Qaida's leader in the war-torn country.

Just before, on Dec. 16, 2004, a video surfaced where he also called on his fighters to strike Gulf oil supplies and warned Saudi leaders they risked a popular uprising.

Since then—silence. Regular interventions by al-Qaida's number two Ayman al-Zawahiri, seen as the ideological brains of the network, has only served to feed feverish speculation on what has happened to Bin Laden.

Zawahiri claimed in a videotape released in September that Bin Laden was still alive and leading "jihad" or holy war against the West.

"Al-Qaida for holy war is still, thanks to God, a base for jihad. Its prince Osama bin Laden, may God protect him, still leads the jihad," said Zawahiri.

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf said recently he did not know whether Bin Laden was dead or alive, adding that he would not like to speculate over his fate.

The commander of US troops in Afghanistan, Gen. Karl Eikenberry, has insisted that Bin Laden was still considered alive, and that US forces continue their hunt for him.

Seemingly more candid was CIA director Porter Goss, who recently told ABC news channel that Bin Laden's hideout was known and implied that the CIA knew more than it could reveal.

US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, meanwhile, this week said he doubted that Bin Laden was now capable of supervising the global operations of the militant organization.

The total eclipse of Bin Laden also gave rise to various speculation on Islamist websites, with some admirers of the terror chief already contemplating that he might be dead.

"Bin Laden, tracked by the intelligence services who are on his heels, is hiding somewhere along the mountain frontiers between Pakistan and Afghanistan," opined one blogger.

Another claimed that "Abu Abdullah (Bin Laden) has deliberately decided to stop all communications to avoid being located by gigantic US surveillance devices."

"O my beloved. I know that you are mortal. No body can oppose the will of God. But the thought of seeing you taken captive fills me with fear," said another in a "letter of affection" addressed online to Bin Laden, following a rumor claiming that al-Qaida chief had perished in the Oct. 8 earthquake which ravaged Pakistan.

But the editor of the Islamabad-based "Mediawatch," Yaqoub McLintock, who is also an expert on al-Qaida, appeared confident as to Bin Laden's safety.

"I think he is alive and well. Admittedly, Bin Laden is not in great health, but he is not at the point of death. All that we hear about his fate is nothing but media speculation. His death would certainly be announced by al-Qaida, in conformity with Sharia (Islamic law)," he said. *AFP*

Wanna stop snoring? Try the Australian didgeridoo

LONDON—KEPT AWAKE AT night by a snoring partner? The answer to your woes could lie—believe it or not—with the Australian didgeridoo.

Researchers in Switzerland examined 25 patients who suffered from snoring and moderate obstructive sleep apnea syndrome, both common sleep disorders.

Half the group were given daily lessons in playing the didgeridoo, a wind instrument about 1.5-m long which originated in northern Australia and is traditionally made from the trunk of a tree hollowed out by termites.

The study, published in the British Medical Journal's online edition on Friday, found that those who played the unusual instrument over a four-month trial period saw a significant improvement in their daytime sleepiness and apnea.

Their partners also reported less disturbance from snoring.

The researchers said training the upper airways through the breathing techniques required to play the didgeridoo was behind the improvement. *Reuters*

Bird flu becoming resistant to Tamiflu

JAKARTA—INDONESIA'S CONFIRMED bird flu death toll rose to 11 Thursday amid worrying new evidence that the virus may be developing resistance to Tamiflu, the only drug known to be effective against it.

A 39-year-old man and an eight-year-old boy were the country's latest victims of the H5N1 strain of the virus, a hospital spokesperson said.

"It's been confirmed. We were informed of the results this morning," Ilham Patu, a spokesperson for Sulianti Saroso hospital, Indonesia's main center for the treatment of bird flu, said.

Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, routinely sends samples of cases that test positive locally abroad for verification.

The man, a resident of South Jakarta, died on Dec. 13, a day after being admitted to the hospital. The boy died two days later at a private hospital in Jakarta.

Health ministry official Hariyadi Wibisono said the test results were from the Centers for Disease Control in the United States and not from a World Health Organization-linked laboratory in Hong Kong, as Patu said earlier.

Asked about the contradictory information, Patu said: "My information was obtained from the health ministry's research and development center. But in any case, it's confirmed."

Most victims in Indonesia have come from densely-populated Jakarta, where many people still live in close proximity to poultry, providing ideal conditions for the virus to pass to humans.

In Vietnam, bird flu had become resistant to the antiviral drug Tamiflu in two fatal cases, a doctor said in what he called a worrying development.

Tamiflu is considered a frontline defense against bird flu and the most effective treatment available to counter the H5N1 strain.

Menno de Jong, from the Institute of Tropical Diseases in southern Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City, said Tamiflu was ineffective in fighting the virus in two girls who died despite being given full doses of the drug.

"Our two patients became resistant despite a full dose of treatment. Both died and in one patient there are some suggestions that the therapeutic failure and ultimately her death may have been caused by the development of resistance," he said.

This patient was a 13-year-old, who died eight days after showing the first symptoms. The other, 18, died three weeks after the onset of symptoms.

"What will be important is to try to learn as much as possible from the next patients. We need to improve treatment of bird flu in this region," he said.

Vietnam has been the country hardest hit by bird flu, which has killed more than 70 people across Asia.

In China state media reported that human trials of a bird flu vaccine had begun this week, with six volunteers being given shots. *AFP*

US Embassy warns of Christmas attacks in Indonesia

JAKARTA—INDONESIA FACES A HIGH THREAT of extremist attacks over the Christmas-New Year holiday season, the US Embassy warned Thursday, after locals and foreigners were also advised to be wary of kidnappings.

"The embassy reminds Americans that in recent years, terrorist attacks have occurred in Indonesia during the Christmas and New Year's holiday season," it said. "The possibility of terrorist attacks appears even higher this year."

The embassy said information obtained last month, when police killed terrorist Azahari Husin, showed militants "were in the advanced stages of planning additional attacks against Westerners in Indonesia."

Videotaped threats against Westerners by a terrorist—suspected to be Azahari's accomplice Noordin Mohammad Top—found at Azahari's hideout were being taken "very seriously," it said.

Azahari, a Malaysian national, was tracked down by police to the East Java hill resort town of Batu, where he was killed in a hail of bullets. An accomplice, that he was holed up with, blew himself up. *AFP*

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Elton, hundreds other gays, wed

SINGER Sir Elton John (right) and his partner David Furnish pose for photographs at the Guildhall in Windsor, Dec. 21, after conducting a short civil "wedding" ceremony at the registry office. AFP

LONDON—STARS OF THE worlds of film, music and sport joined Elton John Wednesday night to celebrate the pop superstar's civil partnership "wedding" to longtime partner David Furnish.

The couple's relationship was legally recognized in a dazzling ceremony in Windsor, west of London, making them among the first of nearly 700 gay and lesbian couples to tie the knot in England and Wales.

John, 58, and his 43-year-old Canadian film director partner exchanged vows in the same 17th century Guildhall venue where Prince Charles wed Camilla Parker Bowles last April.

Fans of the singer—who in the 1980s was married to a female German recording engineer—filled the streets of the well-heeled town, while others followed the action on live television.

But while the ceremony was attended by only a handful of guests, including the couple's parents, stars were out in force Wednesday evening for a reception at the couple's mansion near Windsor.

The guest list included singer Victoria Beckham, actress Helena Bonham Carter and her film director husband Tim Burton, screen legend Michael Caine, plus British tennis ace Greg Rusedski and England cricket captain Michael Vaughan.

Actress Liz Hurley joined the Osbourne family—Ozzy, Sharon, Jack and Kelly—'60s pop star Lulu, former Beatles drummer Ringo Starr, Elvis Costello, tennis champion Boris Becker and golfer Nick Faldo.

Also there were former Police frontman Sting, Hollywood actress Sharon Stone, plus supermodel Claudia Schiffer and designer Donatella Versace from the world of fashion.

The scenes outside John's home were chaotic, with cars snaked back almost half-a-mile waiting to be ushered past the high security at the gates.

Karen Jackson, a local from Windsor stuck in the traffic, joked: "This is probably the best traffic jam I've been stuck in."

Earlier, the slightly rotund John sported a pair of colored glasses and a salmon-colored tie as he arrived in a black Rolls-Royce limousine with Furnish, smiling and waving to the crowd. Both were dressed in dark morning suits.

"They kissed at the end. It was very, very happy. It was just like any other couple getting married," said art dealer Jay Jopling, who witnessed the pair tie the knot.

"It was beautiful. It was very emotional," added his wife, the artist and photographer Sam Taylor-Wood.

The pair were among nearly 700 same-sex couples across the country who lined up to sign official papers giving them virtually the same rights as heterosexual couples in areas like inheritance and tax.

Among the first to take advantage of new legislation were three couples who simultaneously signed on the dotted line at exactly 8 a.m.

That was the moment when the register office opened for what would be a busy day in the Bohemian south coast city of Brighton, England's self-styled gay capital.

The civil partnership act came into force on Dec. 5, having provoked little controversy. But since gay couples are also required to mark a statutory waiting period, the first ceremonies could not take place until this week.

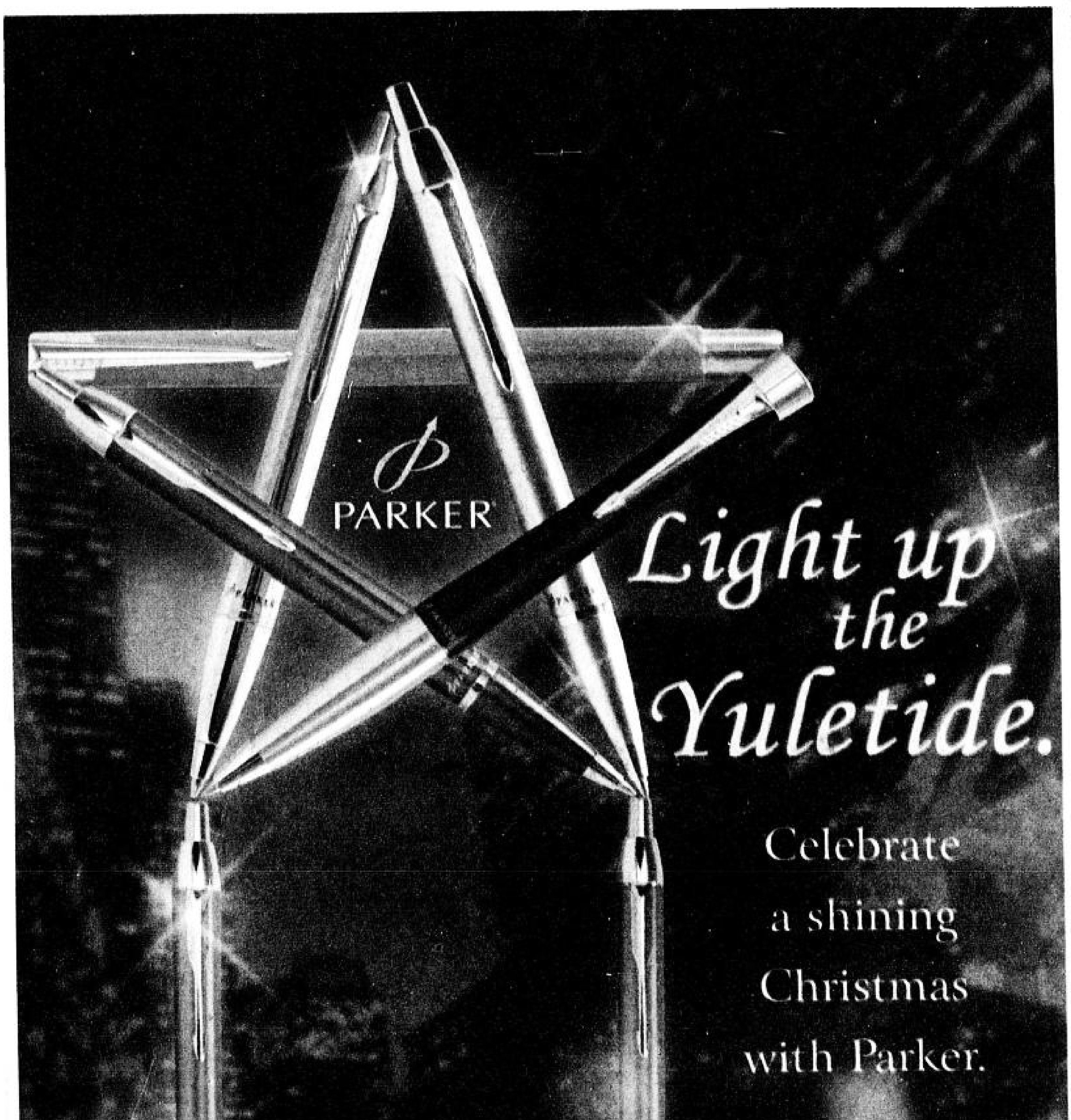
Though most hitchings will take place in England and Wales, the first in the United Kingdom as a whole were conducted Monday in Northern Ireland, followed Tuesday in Scotland.

As the government hailed the development as "another step along the road of equality," in northeast England openly homosexual Anglican vicar Christopher Wardale, 59, exchanged vows in Newcastle with retired professor Malcolm Macourt, 58, his partner of 21 years.

In Brighton, wedding planner Gino Meriano and Mike Ullett became among the first to sign the register at the crack of dawn.

In the British capital, one couple booked a capsule on the London Eye—the futuristic ferris wheel on the south bank of the River Thames—to celebrate the happiest day of their lives with the city literally at their feet.

The wheel was illuminated with pink lights to mark the occasion. *AFP*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Consensual group sex not prostitution or threat to society, says Canada SC

OTTAWA—GROUP SEX AMONG consenting adults is neither prostitution nor a threat to society, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on Wednesday as it lifted a ban on so-called "swingers" clubs.

In a ruling that changes the way Canadian courts determine what poses a threat to the population, the top court threw out the conviction of a Montreal man who ran a club where members could have group sex in a private room behind locked doors.

"Consensual conduct behind code-locked doors can hardly be supposed to jeopardize a society as vigorous and tolerant as Canadian society," said the opinion of the seven-to-two majority, written by Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin.

The decision does not affect laws against prostitution because no money changed hands among the adults having sex.

The court was reviewing an appeal by Jean-Paul Labaye, who ran the L'Orage (Thunderstorm) club. He had been convicted in 1999 of running a "bawdy house"—defined as a place where prostitution or acts of public indecency took place.

Labaye, who is still running the club, said he would go ahead with a new venture with backing from a group of Florida investors.

"We hope clients will be more calm. This will probably lead the way to a good future," he told reporters, saying he was looking at adding a Jacuzzi and a swimming pool.

Labaye said he had about 2,000 regular clients who paid around C$20 ($17) a year for a membership card.

Lawyers for Labaye and the owner of another Montreal swingers' club argued that consensual sex among groups of adults behind closed doors was neither indecent or a risk to society.

The Supreme Court judges agreed.

"Criminal indecency or obscenity must rest on actual harm or a significant risk of harm to individuals or society. The Crown failed to establish this essential element of the offense. (Its) case must therefore fail," McLachlin wrote.

In indecency cases, Canadian courts have traditionally probed whether the acts in question "breached the rules of conduct necessary for the proper functioning of society." The Supreme Court ruled that from now on, judges should pay more attention to whether society would be actively harmed.

This seemed to ensure there could be no repeat of Labaye's original conviction for causing "social harm" by allowing degrading and dehumanizing group sex to take place.

Social conservatives said the ruling could contribute to a general relaxing of indecency standards.

"The court is essentially saying that fairly public sexual acts can be tolerated in commercial establishments," said Janet Epp Buckingham of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

"We found it a disappointing judgment ... You wonder if the court is an appropriate place for these kinds of decisions to be taking place because they don't have broad public hearings with a lot of public input," she told Reuters.

The judges said that just because most Canadians might disapprove of swingers' clubs, this did not necessarily mean the establishments were socially dangerous.

"The causal link between images of sexuality and anti-social behavior cannot be assumed. Attitudes in themselves are not crimes, however deviant they may be or disgusting they may appear," the judges said, noting no one had been pressured to have sex or had paid for sex in the cases before the court. *Reuters*

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FESTIVE MOSCOW
A street vendor waits for customers at the Manezh square in Moscow Dec. 21. Moscow prepares for the New Year festivities and the Orthodox Christmas which Russians celebrate on January 7th. AFP

Hong Kong defeated on political reforms

HONG KONG—THE HONG KONG GOVERNMENT Wednesday suffered defeat of its proposals for limited political reform amid a bitter row over the slow pace of democratic change in the Chinese territory.

Prodemocracy legislators, who said the reforms did not go far enough, rejected recommendations to expand the committee which elects the chief executive and to enlarge the legislature.

The government had proposed doubling the size of the election committee, currently dominated by Beijing-backed elites, to 1,600. It had also recommended enlarging the half-elected, half-appointed legislature from 60 to 70 seats.

Both proposals had 34 votes in favor, 24 against and one abstention. Constitutional changes need the support of two-thirds of the chamber, or 40 members.

Chief executive Donald Tsang, who had lobbied hard for the reforms, called the result "regrettable" and "disappointing."

"For the past few months, I had hoped for a Christmas present from the Legislative Council and unfortunately it hasn't come true," he said.

"We have lost an opportunity to take a significant step towards democracy."

Tsang said the government would accept the legislature's decision.

"But democratic development doesn't stop here. I have the responsibility to lead Hong Kong to reach the ultimate goal of achieving universal suffrage," he said.

"I just understand how formidable this task is."

The two-sided bill, put forth by Beijing-appointed Tsang, was aimed at quelling a clamor for full democracy that has steadily grown since Hong Kong reverted to Chinese rule in 1997.

Democrats, who want Tsang to provide a concrete timetable for reform, said the proposals would have failed to achieve the post-colonial constitution's goal of allowing citizens to elect their leaders.

"I think we need a country that respects the aspirations of the people. I'm proud of being a Chinese if China is strong, not only in terms of its military strength and its economy but rather a respect for human rights and the wishes of the people," Democratic Party chair Li Wing-tat said in the chamber after the vote.

Ma Lik, chair of the progovernment Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong, regretted the outcome.

"I found (the result) was very regrettable. If you want democracy you should have supported the motion earlier," he said.

Rejection of the bill is an embarrassment for Tsang, who took over as chief executive in June, and a major victory for the democrats.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators took to the streets earlier this month to demand the universal suffrage promised to them eight years ago, in the biggest display of public anger since Tsang took office in June.

Prodemocracy legislators have traveled to the United States and Europe to drum up support, while Tsang had made a last-ditch effort on Monday to defuse the crisis.

As a sop to the democrats Tsang had proposed to abolish appointed seats on district councils, the lowest rung of government, in a move seen as significant due to the government's dependence on the appointees for support.

Tsang made an appeal for support in a rare television speech last month, warning that rejection of the electoral reform package would only make it more difficult for Hong Kong to achieve universal suffrage.

The chief executive offered the modest reform proposals after Beijing last year ruled out a swift transition to full democracy.

The ruling Chinese Communist Party fears political upheaval may destabilize the economy of its richest city and spark calls for reform on the mainland. *AFP*

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Silver linings

EDITORIAL

WHEN THE PRICE OF CRUDE OIL IN THE WORLD market was registering record highs, Bukidnon Rep. Miguel Zubiri came up with a bill establishing the National Fuel Ethanol Program to promote the nationwide production and use of the bio-fuel ethanol. That was around August this year. The INQUIRER then noted in an editorial that efforts to cushion the impact of the oil crisis on the Philippine economy and the Filipino people could only succeed if everyone contributed his/her share.

On Nov. 7, 2005, Zubiri's bill got the nod of the House of Representatives. One week later, the bill was in the Senate. Meanwhile, Sen. Manuel Roxas had filed a complementary bill also promoting the production, distribution and use of motor vehicles powered by alternative fuels such as—aside from ethanol—"fuel cell technology, hybrid technology, electric power technology, or other alternative fuel motor vehicle technologies."

"Every cloud has its silver lining…" says the proverb, which is really another way of saying that in every problem lies an opportunity. And again this is being proven true.

The crisis, fueled by runaway oil prices these past two years, has been especially cruel on our people's pockets. The good thing about it though is that it seems to have "energized" our political leaders into looking more seriously for "out-of-the-box solutions to our over-dependence on—or call it addiction to—imported oil.

This is not to say that the country was totally clueless about this problem in the past. Since the time of Ferdinand Marcos, every administration has acknowledged the necessity of reducing our country's dependence on oil imports. And we were able to open up, develop and tap more indigenous energy sources, like geothermal power, through the years.

But except for some sporadic displays of national zeal for the cause of energy dependence, action fell short of rhetoric. The public in general cared little, if at all, that the economy was leaking with so much wasted electricity and extravagant fuel consumption. Oil imports climbed from 9.5 million barrels in 1990 to 52.951 million barrels in 2004. But it would be as pointless to blame President Macapagal-Arroyo or those who preceded her in office for every price spike as allowing her to take credit for every price rollback.

The present crisis has been building up in May 2004, when the benchmark Dubai crude soared to a 13-year high of $36.22 a barrel. Since then, the price would rise for every conceivable reason—ranging from natural disasters (hurricanes threatening or hitting the Gulf of Mexico) to political upheavals (war in Iraq) to market movements (higher demand). Then in September this year, the price hit $70 per barrel.

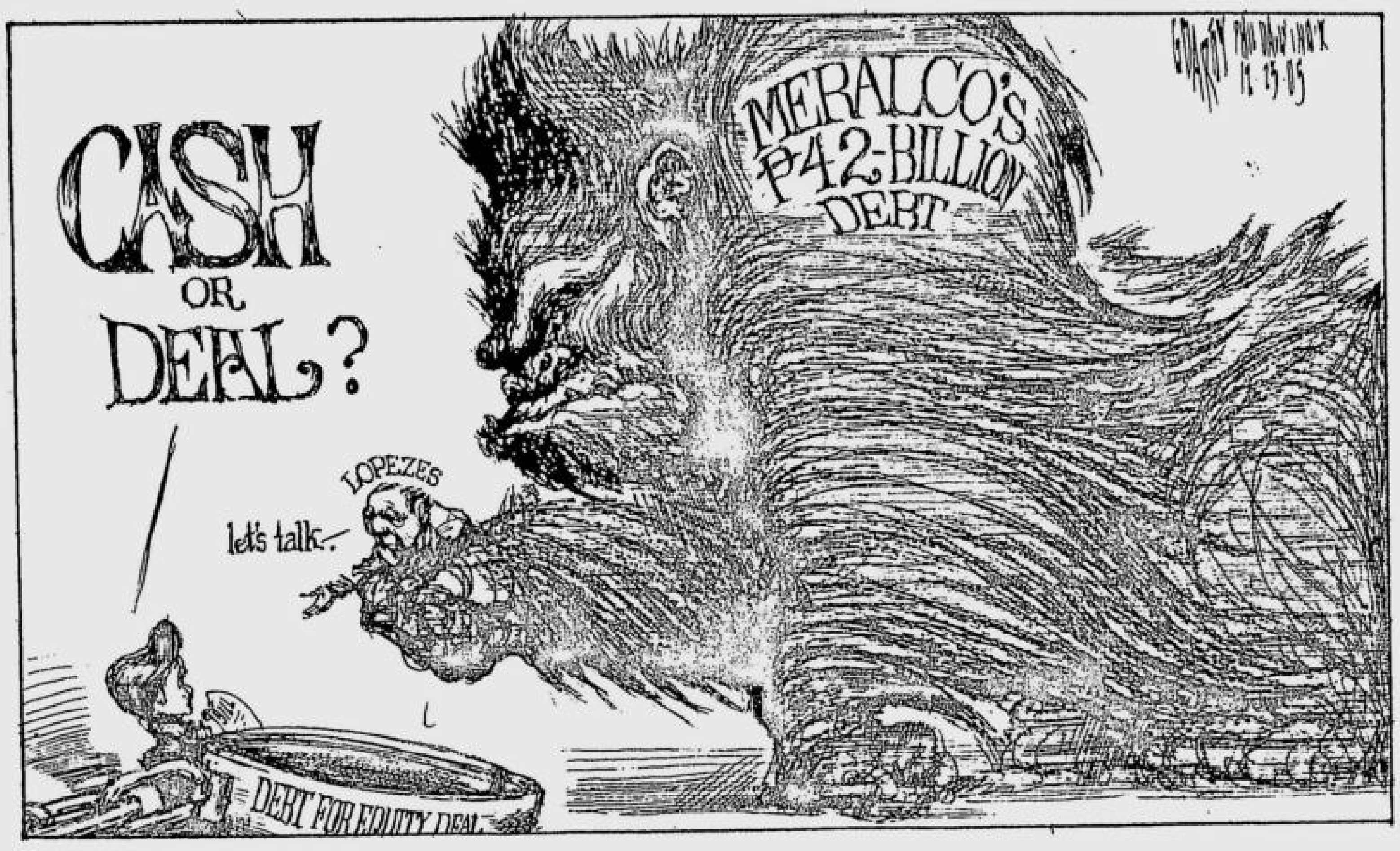
But even if the price has moderated at $60 a barrel, very few would argue that oil prices would go down any time soon to where they were two years ago. President Arroyo, in fact, warned other leaders at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations summit that oil prices could spin out of control.

But certainly the crisis has led us into a vista of opportunities overlooking an open field of solutions for both the energy crisis and other problems. For example, by developing the essentially agri-based bio-fuels (which are not only environment-friendly and renewable but can also be produced locally from indigenous sources, like sugarcane, coconut, corn and cassava), we may yet catch up with that elusive countryside development goal we have been dreaming of for decades. The bio-fuels program can perk up employment in our sluggish rural communities, which can slacken the pull of migration to urban centers. The promises seem endless, really.

But then all these plans regarding bio-fuels are essentially still on the drawing board. Many details have yet to be threshed out. There are many things that need to be done before even a fraction of what we have in mind can be put to action. We are far behind our Asian neighbors in this effort. In other words, there is a long way to go and the Zubiri and Roxas bills are but small steps in that direction. And we are not moving fast enough. We are still mostly talking.

The proverb does not talk about a silver lining alone. It says in full: "Every cloud has its silver lining, but it is sometimes a little difficult to get it to the mint."

So there we are. It is not enough that we look at the silver lining. We must get that silver to the mint. And it is long past midnight for doing this.



This Christmas, give gifts to animals, too

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

MERRY CHRISTMAS TO EVERYBODY, including President Macapagal-Arroyo and First Gentleman Mike Arroyo and the rest of the First Family. May the blessings and the light of heaven shine upon them so that they will see things not from the high position of power but as they really are from the viewpoint of the common people. For pride, after all, is the most deadly of the cardinal sins, and humility and honesty the most important of the virtues.

* * *

Every Christmas, we never forget to give gifts to our family members, relatives and friends. We greet them Merry Christmas, and enjoy long chats and good food with them during Christmas parties. But we usually forget some members of our families: our pets.

Our dogs and cats are usually locked away somewhere during parties so they won't disturb the guests. In fact, they are forgotten during the greater part of every day. Yet they are the members of the household who pine for you when you are at work or away somewhere having a good time with your fellow humans. They wait patiently the whole day for you to come home and when they hear the hum of the car or your footsteps at the door, they jump up with joy to welcome you.

But do you greet them when you come in, pat their heads, tickle their throats or scratch their tummies? Probably not. You probably yell at the dog for putting his paws on your pants and shirt, or kick the cats as they lovingly wrap themselves around your leg.

That's how humans usually repay the love and affection of animals. Pets are often more loyal and affectionate than humans, without asking for anything, but we don't give back to them the same loyalty and affection.

I am waxing sentimental about animals because I just came from the Christmas party of the Philippine Animal Welfare Society (PAWS) at its Animal Rehabilitation Center in Quezon City. And I am writing about pets because we spend lots of money for humans but very little for our pets. I mean the ordinary Filipino dogs and cats, the so-called "*askals*" (for "*asong kalye*") and "*pusakals*" (for "*pusang kalye*"), not the spoiled foreign breeds that their owners show off at dog and cat shows.

The *askals* and *pusakals*, on the other hand, are fed leftovers and rarely get vaccinations. When they get sick, they rarely get veterinary care. They are set loose in the streets where they scavenge for food from trash cans and are impregnated by male strays. The puppies are usually given away. They are the lucky ones; kittens are often abandoned on sidewalks and vacant lots where, if they don't die, they grow up to become starved and disease-ridden strays, reproducing indiscriminately, until they die at a young age.

Because of irresponsible pet owners, many Filipino dogs and cats become strays and become problems. A human sees a cute puppy or kitten and takes it home. The puppy or kitten is loved and cared for well—but only while they are small and cute. Once they grow into no-longer-cute adults, the humans lose interest. They are let loose in the streets, and sometimes locked out of the yards.

Ironically, that happens only to our native dogs. The imported breeds are treated differently. They are almost always very well cared for and make frequent trips to the vet.

I am exasperated by this colonial mentality of Filipinos even with regard to dogs and cats. Native dogs and cats make better pets than the pure breeds. They are easier to care for, more disease-resistant and do not need expensive imported food. And they can be as handsome as the pure breeds, given the same grooming and vet care. They can also be trained like the pure breeds.

Their disadvantage is that they don't have the status of Labrador Retrievers and German Shepherds, Rottweilers and Dobermans, poodles and terriers, or Persian and Siamese cats—and many pet owners are status seekers.

A pet welfare society, Cara Philippines, is trying to give status to owning native dogs. "Proudly Pinoy" is its slogan and it encourages owners to take their "proudly Pinoy" dogs and cats to their affairs.

But going back to the problem of unwanted pets, PAWS is doing a wonderful job of rescuing abandoned pets, rehabilitating them and having them adopted by caring families. Cara is addressing the problem of strays and expanding populations by spaying and neutering dogs and cats, including the strays, so they won't multiply. These private groups are doing the work that should be done by the national and local governments but they get no help from them. They survive on donations.

So, what I'm saying in a roundabout way is: This Christmas, don't think only of your human friends and relatives. Think also of the animals. Give them gifts, too. After all, the Baby Jesus was surrounded by many animals in His manger during that first Christmas long ago. They are as much a part of Christmas as the Three Kings and Santa Claus.

How can you give gifts to animals? Donate to PAWS and Cara and other animal welfare societies. Your donations will be used to care for the animals. You can give gifts to your friends by donating to PAWS in their names. PAWS will then send them cards saying that you have donated a certain amount in their names. There's still time to do it before the New Year.

Or you can adopt an abandoned dog or cat. PAWS will see to it that they are trained and in good health before giving it to you.

Dogs and cats are very affectionate and loving pets. They will return double the love and care that you give them. Give them a Merry Christmas and you will have one, too.

Tradition and popular constitutionalism

PASSION FOR REASON

Raul C. Pangalangan

WHEN THE JUDICIAL AND BAR COUNCIL earlier scrapped the interviews of sitting justices, I disputed the role of purported tradition, especially when it collides with express rules. In choosing a chief justice, the argument for the "tradition" of seniority is even weaker.

The constitutionalist Vicente V. Mendoza, a retired Supreme Court justice and now speaking as an academic from Diliman, says that the so-called rule of seniority in appointing chief justices has no firm basis in history or tradition. Half of our past chief justices, he says, were not the most senior when they were appointed. He cites Chief Justices Victorino Mapa, Manuel Araullo, Ramon Avanceña, Jose Yulo, Felix Makasiar, Ramon Aquino and, under Cory Aquino, after seniority had been rearranged, Pedro Yap and Marcelo Fernan.

Mendoza says that this is the first time that seniority has been argued extensively, and the appointment of Artemio Panganiban "frees us from a kind of doctrinaire thinking that has prevented us from considering other factors like merit and leadership," in particular, the nominee's approach to issues on which the Court and the nation are divided. It falls upon the chief justice to shepherd the Court to lay down legal doctrine, and ensure that both the majority and the dissenters lay bare the basis of their decisions. Only then can the Court advance its jurisprudence, which is not a mere polling on conclusions but a shared discourse on what values truly matter.

Critics say that the seniority "rule" has been hallowed into tradition by sustained practice and this insulates the Court from politics. If so, I wonder why these same critics also say that the sustained practice has thus far produced a politicized judiciary.

When US Chief Justice John Roberts was appointed (from outside the Supreme Court, mind you), they studied his past decisions to divine the direction of the Roberts Court, which now I essay for the Panganiban Court.

The new chief magistrate trained under Jovito Salonga, his law dean at Far Eastern University, and whose prestigious law firm he joined upon graduating cum laude. When Salonga became Senate president, he invited Panganiban to serve as his counsel in the Senate and in the Liberal Party.

On matters of governance and economic policy, you will recognize what Stanford Law dean Larry Kramer calls "popular constitutionalism." In the WTO ratification decision, Panganiban empowered the people—not the courts—to interpret the protectionist clauses through the democratic process. "Let the people, through their … elected officers, make their free choice." In the Mining Act case, he said: "The Constitution should be read in broad, life-giving strokes," and gave the politically accountable branches "sufficient discretion…to enable them to attract foreign investments [while] secur[ing] for our people…the blessings of prosperity." He concluded: "Let not this Court interfere inordinately and unnecessarily."

Significantly, Panganiban concurred in leading decisions along the same lines by his eminent rival for the post, Justice Reynato Puno. In Tatad v. Secretary of Energy, Puno likewise cited the Constitution—and, emphatically, not economic policy—and held that the Oil Industry Deregulation Law perpetuated the monopoly of the oil giants. Panganiban also joined Puno's forceful dissent in the Manila Hotel case, where the Court used a strained reading of the Filipino First clause to allow the losing Filipino bidder to match post hoc the winning bid.

Conversely, Puno has joined Panganiban's *ponencias*. In Frivaldo, wherein a perennial election winner was unseated each time for being an alien but finally regained citizenship belatedly after election day, Panganiban said: "Time and again, the Court has held that the sovereign will must prevail over legal technicalities." Puno called it a "path-breaking *ponencia*…which is pro-people and pierces the myopia of legalism. Upholding the sovereign will of the people which is the be-all and the end-all of republicanism, it rests on a foundation that will endure time and its tempest."

Forward thinking on governance, Panganiban is however conservative on social questions, with a deep religiosity that endears him to devout conservatives but not to social activists. Significantly though, citing the UP Law Center-drafted Family Code, his Molina decision clarified for estranged couples the meaning of psychological incapacity as a ground to nullify marriage.

He has also held, in dissent, that the Death Penalty Law is unconstitutional because Congress failed to define the terms "compelling reasons" and "heinous crimes," the only exceptions permitted under the constitutional ban on capital punishment. He has strictly applied the law against warrantless searches and seizures. We cannot "condone law-breaking in the name of law enforcement." On anti-corruption, he boldly won the assent of his colleagues to strike down the Comelec's computerization as a fraud.

In Marcos v. Comelec, when the majority allowed Imelda to run despite her questionable "residence," his dissent taunted their "contortive way of interpreting the Constitution [and insisted on its] common meaning [as understood] by the common people…who are required to obey it."

Panganiban has not balked at reversing settled doctrine, and heeds Holmes' sage advice: The judge "must not stop at consecrated phrases [that hinder] further analysis," but rather must "take its chance for life. …In the end, succeed or fail, the fight is joy, and I shall long hear it in the trumpet of your cheer."

* * *

Comments to passionforreason@gmail.com

Two economies

ANALYSIS

Amando Doronila

(Concluded from Wednesday)

THE HIGH-INTENSITY CRISIS OF THE GOVERNMENT of President Macapagal-Arroyo during the third quarter of 2005 did not confirm the worst fears that it would paralyze the economy. Although her government stood on the brink of collapse on July 8 over the Garcillano tapes, the economy stood its ground. Still the gross domestic product slowed to 4.1 percent in July to September, down from the 6.2 percent in the same quarter last year, disappointing economic officials who had predicted at least a 5-percent growth.

That the economy did grow, if only slightly, despite political uncertainty, prompted the government's claim that it had insulated the economy from political turbulence. But independent economists said the 4.1-percent growth was "not good enough."

What the economic indicator highlighted was the deep shock-absorption capacity of the economy against the disruptive power struggle of the political elite, including both administration and opposition elements.

The economy's resilience is proof of its relative independence from the country's political upheaval. Its inherent capacity to rebound is not rooted in the regime's crisis economic management ability. And this resilience has not remained unnoticed by the foreign business and investment community. They have sighted some "turning points" with the implementation of tough tax reforms (notably the expanded value-added tax), the sustained peso rally and the strong inflow of overseas workers' remittances during the past six months.

These reforms were strong medicine that aggravated social distress which should partly account for the continuous fall of the President's approval rating, despite the good news about the peso's rally and the heavy remittances.

The paper of professor Hal Hill of the Australian National University, which I reviewed the other day, offers illumination regarding the separateness of Philippine politics and economics which he nicely described as the possible emergence of a "fire wall" that insulated the economy against incineration from the heat of political conflict.

According to the paper, "there are really two economies" in the Philippines: "One, where Filipino talent is able to demonstrate its skills at home, and increasingly abroad, is thriving. The other, where this talent is stifled by patronage politics and demoralized bureaucracy, is underperforming.

"In the former 'enclaves of success,' able to operate independently of government interference, or requiring little by way of complementary public facilities, the Philippines is highly competitive. Examples include manufacturing facilities in export processing zones and a wide array of service activities in areas as diverse as IT, call enters and medical support."

"Where to from here?" the paper asks. For the Philippines to be restored to its rightful place as a leading East Asian economy, four key requirements are necessary:

"First, a resolution of the fiscal crisis. This requires a substantial increase in government revenue: a Congress willing to assume responsibilities and pass crucial fiscal measures; major reform of the tax code (i.e., the country has one of the highest corporate tax rates in East Asia but one of the lowest collection rates); and inculcating a culture of tax compliance and honest collection. Only then will the government have the capacity to deliver fast and equitable growth."

The paper expects a major constitutional change that "will make economic policy a good deal easier." It notes that the mining sector, "essentially shut down for the past two decades by NGO activists, has a new lease on life."

In this regard, the draft of constitutional amendments submitted by the Constitutional Commission to the President, proposes the liberalization of the nationalist provisions of the 1987 Constitution. The proposal would open up certain key sectors of the economy to foreign ownership.

Without discussing the merits of these proposals, it is important to note that the focus of interest of the business sector is sharply different from that of the political class. The political sector is exercised over amendments that seek the shift to the parliamentary system and, especially contentious, that allows Ms Arroyo to complete her elected term until 2010.

"Second, given the complexity and fluidity of Philippine politics, measures which insulate the business world from political machinations are needed to restore business confidence.

"Third, the debilitating conflicts in Mindanao, and elsewhere, need to be resolved. The recently released Philippine Human Development Report documents the terrible social impacts of the conflict, especially (in the) Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao.

Fourth (and this is very relevant in the light of current developments and coup plots), "the military needs to be kept in the barracks. The longer the conflict in Mindanao continues, the longer the military is woefully under-funded, and the longer the political impasse persists (and with it, superficially the pretext for intervention, to 'restore order'), the less likely it is that restless and ambitious sections of the military will be restrained.

Hill says "this is by no means an impossibly ambitious agenda." He cites the presidency of Fidel Ramos, from 1992 to 1998, which delivered on much of it, "and the country prospered as a result."

"Hopefully, President Arroyo has almost five years (that is if she can complete her term)," he concludes. "How she addresses these and other pressing issues will largely determine how future historians judge her."

The 'King Kong' of the Season

AT LARGE

Rina Jimenez-David

ABOUT THE ONLY "BABY JESUS" FIGURE THAT survived the "massacre of the innocents" among my once-extensive *belen* collection is a fairly large ceramic "Baby Jesus," depicted as he would be if lying on a crib in the manger. I've forgotten who gave me this figure, but we've always had a problem with displaying this "Baby Jesus" because he's much larger than all the Nativity figures we've had and came all by his lonesome, with no matching Mother Mary or St. Joseph to place him in context.

But with all of my Nativity scenes missing a "Baby Jesus," I figured I'd make up for the infant's absence by placing the big "Baby Jesus" in their midst, as if to make up for the infant's absence in all the other *belens*.

When my daughter, who was in charge this year of the Yuletide décor at home, saw the humongous infant in the midst of much smaller manger scenes, she exclaimed: "Mom! Why did you put the baby here? He looks like King Kong among the *belens!*" To which there could be no other answer, of course, than: "Well, isn't he supposed to be the King Kong of the Season?"

And there, dear readers, is how desperate and distracted columnists find subjects for their columns.

I remember a homily included in Bishop Soc Villegas' book of reflections in which he sought to remind the faithful about who the center of the entire Christmas celebration is—or should be. Imagine, Bishop Soc wrote, if it was your birthday and your entire family left the house to celebrate but forgot to bring you along? That, he said, is how Jesus must feel nowadays amid the frenzied Christmas feasting, a celebration that has become an entirely secular event, as if Jesus, whose "birthday" we are supposed to be observing, has indeed been left home alone and forgotten.

* * *

MAYBE that's why I decided to collect *belens*, or manger scenes, in the first place: to remind me, my family and all the holiday visitors to our home about what Christmas is all about—that lovely, quiet and chilly evening in the hills of Bethlehem when, in the humblest and most innocuous setting, the Savior was born, worshipped only by shepherds and barnyard animals, but attended by angels and later, Three Kings from afar.

I suppose I should be more upset than I am now about the loss not just of the Baby Jesuses, but of most of my collection—lost to house repairs, careless storage and floods and mildew. Fortunately, our "original" family *belen*, a "modern" wooden set bought when Pie and I were newlyweds and celebrating Christmas for the first time, has survived, albeit a little worn through the years.

This first set has since been augmented by other scenes bought here and abroad, the purchase dictated by whim (something in the characters' features should appeal to me), uniqueness, or size (the smaller the better). Friends, knowing of my fondness for *belens*, have also gifted me several sets. A trip to Mexico is especially memorable because of the number of *belens* I was able to buy, including an Aztec-influenced set, of which only two figures survive.

* * *

ON A TRIP to Egypt, for the Cairo conference on population and development, I was strolling through the international bazaar when I came across a manger scene with the humans and animals molded out of clay. I would have bought it on the spot if I hadn't noticed that the Baby Jesus was missing an arm (apparently, it broke off in transit).

I told the trader that I would buy the set, but at half the price because the Baby was missing one arm. The trader, smooth and unflappable like Arab traders of legend, looked at me with mock horror. "Do you know the story of this grouping?" he asked. I pretended ignorance. "That's why all these adults are standing around the baby," the trader reassured, "they are guarding him because he has only one arm!"

I was so amused by this blatant lie, I ended up buying the set, and for a smaller discount than I wanted. But it always made for a compelling conversation piece. Sadly, the entire set has either disappeared or been broken.

But something tells me I can rebuild the collection with little difficulty. The only real losses are the memories that went with each set, but these can always be retrieved at will, even if the *belens* that triggered them have either been lost or are missing the centerpiece figure.

Besides, I now have an excuse to start buying *belens* again. In previous years, my family actually physically prevented me from even getting near *belens* for sale. There was no longer any space in the house for any new *belen*, they remonstrated. It had come to a point that even our bathrooms had *belens* on display!

* * *

TO MAKE up for the missing Baby Jesuses, my daughter volunteered to "create" new babies for some of the *belens*.

For most of an evening, she labored over tissue paper and torn newspapers, glue and cornstarch, and fashioned babies swaddled in what she hoped would pass for linen. Unfortunately, the finished products looked more like mutant offspring of the pod people than the Son of God made Man. Still, we have put the "new" babies in pride of place in the center of the *belens*. They may not look like much, but Jesus was not one to worry about appearances, was he?

As for the "King Kong" baby, he remains nestled among the smaller manger scenes, smiling benignly, and looking like he belongs there. We're sure visitors will have much to comment upon, and most of it will have something to do with "King Kong" in the land of the miniature *belens*. But we're sure Baby Jesus wouldn't mind. It's His birthday, after all, and He rightfully should be the center of attention.

A stressful Christmas

LOOKING BACK

Ambeth R. Ocampo

ONE OF THE 1996 RIZAL CENTENNIAL PROJECTS was envisioned to provide a permanent and easy way for people to trace Rizal's last walk from his Fort Santiago cell to what is now Rizal Park. Using what is allegedly Rizal's exact shoe size, footprints were installed on the ground to show us the route. Originally, all the footsteps were to have been made in shiny and weather-proof brass, but on second thought, everyone knew that if the cast-iron manholes and the heavy steel railings on our overpasses are not safe from thieves, the Rizal footprints would soon be history. Thus, the impressive brass footsteps can only be found inside Fort Santiago. As soon as you step out of the gated and guarded perimeter of the historic fort, the footsteps suddenly turn into plain cement. Much of this, unfortunately, has been obliterated and we have lost another way to remember our history.

If you are able to find one of these steps today, try to put one of your feet over it and feel what it is like to be quite literally in Rizal's shoes. Frankly, I think the shoe size is inaccurate because in one of his letters to his family from Dapitan, Rizal requested shoes for Josephine Bracken and noted that she had feet bigger than his.

Now, try walking over these Rizal steps and you will notice that they are too close to each other. Following the steps on the ground, like those old dance-step patterns, induces a rather awkward way of walking. I remember bringing this up during a meeting of the National Centennial Commission. I showed the late Salvador Laurel, then NCC chair, how unnatural it was to walk using these steps, and recommended that a more normal and relaxed pacing be used.

Eyewitness accounts say that Rizal walked quite calmly to the site of execution. He chatted with people around him and at times appeared cheerful. This was definitely not the mood I got from the Rizal footsteps. When I asked for an explanation, one of the NCC officials, obviously involved in the project, replied cheekily: "*Kung kayo po ba ay papunta sa lugar kung saan kayo babarilin, magmamadali ba kayo?*" The statement was so startling I let it go, and so the steps are the way they are today.

Did Rizal walk slowly? Did he try to delay in order to cling to life a few minutes more? This we will never know and that is what makes history so open-ended and fascinating.

In the long years of teaching and writing this column, we often realize that common sense is often absent when we visit the past because we have lofty pre-conceived notions about what happened then. Each year at Christmas, while all the other columnists are writing about the man in the manger, my imagination does not go 2,000 years back. It only goes as far back as 1896 just thinking about, or trying to imagine, Rizal who spent the worst Christmas of his life waiting to be sentenced on Dec. 26, 1896.

Only two letters survive during this stressful Christmas, both letters to Luis Taviel de Andrade who had been appointed to defend him in a military court. Rizal chose Luis from a list because when he was in the Philippines in late 1887 to early 1888, he had a bodyguard named Jose Taviel de Andrade who became his friend. Jose and Luis were brothers and both were briefly associated with Rizal.

The letter of Dec. 20, 1896 informed Luis that his sister would see him to offer the services of a professional lawyer to help in Rizal's defense. Knowing the strong personalities of his mother and sisters, Rizal warned:

"It is very possible that my sister may go to your house to speak to you about my case; and it is very possible also that in her eagerness to see me freed, she may ask you something that may vex you. You will know how to forgive the impatience of women. She (who does not know you personally) has indicated to me the convenience of a consultation with a professional lawyer. Frankly, having you, I do not want him or do I need him. I trust more in the nobility of the defender than in practical ability and I believe you have enough of the latter for my little case. Moreover, you are better informed of certain matters than a lawyer with whom I have not spoken. However, as I have put my case in your hands, I give myself up to your disposition. Do as you please, accept consultation or not, as it deems best to you. I am satisfied with my choice."

Since he got the death sentence, Rizal obviously made the wrong choice. But it is significant that Rizal trusted more in nobility than ability.

Luis Taviel de Andrade had other plans for Christmas Day, provoking Rizal to send him a very sharp letter that reads:

"The judge has informed me this morning [Dec. 25, 1896] that my case will be taken up before the plenary court tomorrow. I have been waiting for you this morning to speak with you about an important matter but undoubtedly your pursuits did not permit you to come as the judge expected. If you have time to spare, I should like to speak with you before I appear before the Council. I would appreciate it very much, this afternoon, this evening or [early tomorrow] morning.

"Wishing you Merry Christmas, I reiterate I am as ever your most attentive affectionate servant and client who kisses your hand."

Given these churlish words, we know what mood Rizal was in on Christmas 1896.

* * *

Comments are welcome at aocampo@ateneo.edu

Christmas 1945

PINOY KASI

Michael L. Tan

LAST FRIDAY, MY COLUMN WAS ABOUT HOW WE MIGHT use our holiday gifts to promote "native chic"—the idea that local products aren't just good but very good and, if we want to play on class consciousness, are actually most chic.

Some friends have been calling in to say they appreciated the reminder, one of them being Tita Gilda Cordero-Fernando, who asked for more "native chic" columns. Since I can (almost) never say no to her, I thought of expanding that first article while we're still in the holiday season.

For today's column, I'm going to pick up on this idea of native chic, emphasizing the need to buy local as a way of building not just economic but also social capital.

168

My column last week suggested, strongly, that we might want to avoid 168 for Christmas shopping, even if, admittedly, its stuff is really, really cheap. Shortly after I did the column, I read that the Bureau of Internal Revenue raided 168 and found that 9 out of every 10 stalls there were evading taxes. That should be enough reason to avoid 168, right?

Not quite. Frankly, considering the way our taxes are used (or misused), 168's tax evasion isn't my main reason for boycotting it. My problem with 168 is that precious foreign exchange goes into the importation of those goods, and I'm being kind here, using the word "importation" (there's a lot of smuggling and corruption at Customs involved).

The capitalists are mainland Chinese (and, lately Koreans, I hear) so the money made doesn't stay either, except for the paltry wages paid to the sales clerks. Well, there are rumors that the money does stay in the country to fund less than wholesome manufacturing activities by the mainland Chinese. I have no way of verifying this, so I won't go into detail.

All said, 168 doesn't help the country and may even be doing great harm. An irony really because "168" is derived from the Chinese's love of magical numbers: 168 means "the road to prosperity." The question is, whose prosperity?

For capitalism to work, capital must generate more capital. That isn't happening with 168's operations. At least the Chinese goods sold in legitimate mall establishments help to lubricate the economy through taxes (sort of) and new venture capital.

Social capital

But there's more to all this than loss of economic capital. For the country to move forward, we also need social capital, which consists of knowledge, skills and values that are passed from one generation to another. Like economic capital, social capital needs to accumulate and to "reproduce."

We lose both economic and social capital with our addiction to imported stuff. Certainly, the lure of the "imported" is universal, and certainly we've been addicted to imported stuff for several centuries—even before the Spaniards arrived, there was a thriving trade with the Chinese.

But my gripe is that today, with import liberalization, our addiction has grown to an unprecedented scale, to the extent that we are killing initiatives for local production. Why bother to put up new manufacturing firms when you can just import from China? What happens here is an erosion of traditional knowledge and skills, the social capital future generations could have used.

Yesterday's INQUIRER had an article about how lantern makers were losing out to the cheap imported Chinese lights. Even sadder was how they've stopped producing some product lines, such as abaca lanterns. We're bound to see more of these products disappearing, together with vital knowledge and skills. Even more disturbing, I hear that cheap versions of our lanterns are now beginning to show up overseas—produced in mainland China. I shudder to think that in a few years, my Yna will be buying "Filipino" lanterns that are made in China, perhaps with a whole bunch of kitschy electronic innovations. I'd be heartbroken, too, if all that I'll have to show her are photographs of the original traditional lanterns.

Carols and cards

When we buy local products, we're not just supporting local businesses, we're actually creating a demand for more of those local products, which means knowledge and skills are passed on, often with innovations.

Nothing is too inconsequential as we build this social capital. I'm still perplexed at the lack of locally designed Christmas cards and wonder why it took the Unicef to popularize Baldemor designs for such cards. OK, so maybe paper Christmas cards are on their way out because of e-cards on the Internet, but that should only push us to move in and produce Filipino designs for these e-cards.

The other night, I brought my Yna to her first concert: the UP Singing Ambassadors' "Pamaskong Handog" by the Baywalk. I had a moment of nostalgia remembering how our school choir went around caroling. That's disappearing, too, with caroling now used by urban poor kids to extort money as they ambush your car: "Pay or we torture you with our singing." I sometimes tell the kids, at least sing local carols, but I wonder just how many of these songs are still being passed on.

The UP Singing Ambassadors does have a new CD, "Songs of the Season," with their rendition of 15 traditional English and Filipino carols, explaining why they keep reaping so many awards.

Building social capital doesn't mean sticking to the traditional. I read about a CD of Kapampangan carols, "Kalam ning Pasko," composed by Crispin Cadiang and sung by the likes of Mon David and Antoinette Taus. Simply having carols in Kapampangan is an example of building social capital.

But I haven't been able to find that CD in Manila. We need better marketing for so many of these products, and together with that marketing we need more conscious efforts to build on the "social capital" aspect. For example, the recordings could come with a brief historical vignette for each of the songs. It was only yesterday, through Manolo Quezon's column, that I learned about "Payapang Daigdig" being composed by Felipe de Leon in 1945, a few months after the bombing of Manila that killed thousands of Filipinos. Christmas that year must have been harrowing for the maimed, hungry and homeless survivors.

Manolo's history of the song could not have been more timely because the night before I was listening to it on the Singing Ambassadors' latest CD. It's always been one of my favorites and I suspect it will be for Yna, too. For now, I'm fully content humming the tune to Yna as a lullaby, dreaming of De Leon's peaceful nights, quiet stars and the gentle breeze. But someday, when Yna's older, around Noche Buena and beneath a colorful *parol*, hopefully not made in China, I'll explain the lyrics to her, and why, remembering Christmas 1945, we must never give up on building peace, at home and in the world.

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PPI

Medalists deserve foreign treat

I SAW NO REASON WHY NEAL Cruz, in his Dec. 12 column, should question the decision of First Gentleman Mike Arroyo to treat our medalists in the South East Asian Games to Hong Kong Disneyland.

These athletes are ordinary mortals. Just like most of us, they are only too willing to grab a rare opportunity to travel abroad, an opportunity which, for some of them, will only knock once. This is not—I repeat, this is not—in defense of the First Gentleman or a critique of Cruz. This is an honest opinion on the matter.

I agree with Cruz: there are many scenic spots in our country that are worth our time and money. He advocates that our politicians and citizens who can dig deep into their pockets should prioritize these tourist havens in support of the Department of Tourism's "Wow Philippines!" And who can argue with that?

But while some of them may have extra bucks to spare for vacation, most of our athletes come from humble beginnings. In the past, for them, going abroad could only happen in their wildest dreams. Anyway, because they live in the Philippines, they would have more opportunities to see the country's tourist spots.

These heroes worked so hard to give our country its first overall championship in the SEA Games and they deserve well a vacation, here or abroad, and it does not matter which one they get to "see" first.

As Cruz wrote in his column, he had been to all the Disneylands as well as to other theme parks in Florida and Canada. Why deny these athletes the opportunity to see for themselves and compare the beauty of our tourist attractions with those of other countries?

—HECTOR MANAHAN,
hecmanph@yahoo.com

Garcillano provided lesson on chutzpah

THE WORD "CHUTZPAH" IS THE only word with which we can aptly describe former Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano's performance at the House of Representatives.

For those unfamiliar with the word, the best exposition of its meaning was given by the lyricist Sammy Cahn. He said chutzpah was characterized by the man who murdered his parents and then, when he was charged with the crime, threw himself to the mercy of the court on account of his being an orphan.

Garcillano provided an equally appropriate example when he claimed he was unable to answer questions regarding the wiretapped tape as it was subject to a legal proceeding that he had initiated.

Chutzpah!

—PHILIP G.D. LEWIS,
Block 6 Lot 4, Calle Apitong,
Nova Tierra Village,
Lanang, Davao City

Clouds over Christmas

INQ7 readers zero in on the ugly, uncivil face of the Philippine civil service, especially in the Christmas season.

VOICES ON INQ7.NET

"HOY! PAMASKO DIYAN! PAMASKO DIYAN ha!"

That was from an ugly, burly Filipino responsible for stamping my passport. I supposed he was from the Bureau of Immigration. Looking at him with extreme loathing, I could see the pile of dollars on the table he was using. You can just imagine what I wanted to do to him.

Three weeks ago at a presentation of Secretary Ricardo Saludo to convince the Filipino community in San Francisco that everything was going to be all right in "Perlas ng Silangan," Jacquie Lingad-Ricci, a popular community leader, told Saludo and the 100 or so people at the forum about her experience in Manila's Ninoy Aquino International Airport. It was not something to be proud of.

Another gentleman told Saludo of his experience at Naia with "extortionists in uniform" who were asking him for "*pamasko*" in a threatening voice.

What could Saludo say? The right hand does not know what the kleptomaniac left hand is doing?

All these lovely "*pamasko*" greetings and stories of Filipino expatriates who have been propping up the Philippines with $12 billion in remittances are going around the Internet.

Hoy Pamasko diyan, ha. Pamasko?!#!%@%#@%—**Cesar Torres, Richmond, California**

* * *

The moment you're back in the Philippines, you feel you have to hold your belongings close to you. These immigration people and airport personnel in uniform are so arrogant and conceited, asking you blatantly for all kinds of things, not only money and, mind you, not only during the Christmas season.

It's like no other airport in the world. In Frankfurt, Bonn, Heathrow, Melbourne, Singapore, Hong Kong, Thailand and Malaysia, airport personnel are very tactful and courteous. If you leave something anywhere, it will be returned to you before you notice it's missing.

It is so disgustingly different at the Manila airport, especially when you are traveling with foreign friends. I tried very hard to convince my foreign friends to spend their scheduled holidays in the Philippines, even e-mailing them about the beautiful scenery (in www.thelandofpromise.com), and telling them how they could communicate directly with the folk, including little children, in English.

A Philippine immigration officer once held up my Australian friend Michael Cornea for two hours for no reason, just chatting nonsense. Whew, these immoral immigration people!

Maybe we will progress some day after we realize that we have to discipline ourselves and be vigilant about others who are undisciplined. I'm very hopeful that good leaders will arise soon to settle very simple issues like this.—**Ric Capistrano, Victoria, Australia**

* * *

The order of the Bureau of Immigration banning its employees (from saying "Merry Christmas") at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport Terminals 1 and 2 is quite commendable, considering that the practice of greeting incoming travelers from abroad "Merry Christmas" has become a practice every Christmas season.

For Filipino travelers, the perception is likely to be that the immigration personnel are expecting a "gift" in return. Foreigners simply greet back.—**Tomas Tuason, Quezon City**

IF you have any complaints, grievances or suggestions about the treatment of news and photos by the Inquirer, you may write to the Readers' Advocate, Philippine Daily Inquirer, Chino Roces Avenue, corner Yague and Mascardo Streets, City of Makati or send a fax to Nos. 897-4793, 897-4794, or e-mail readersadvocate@ inquirer.com.ph

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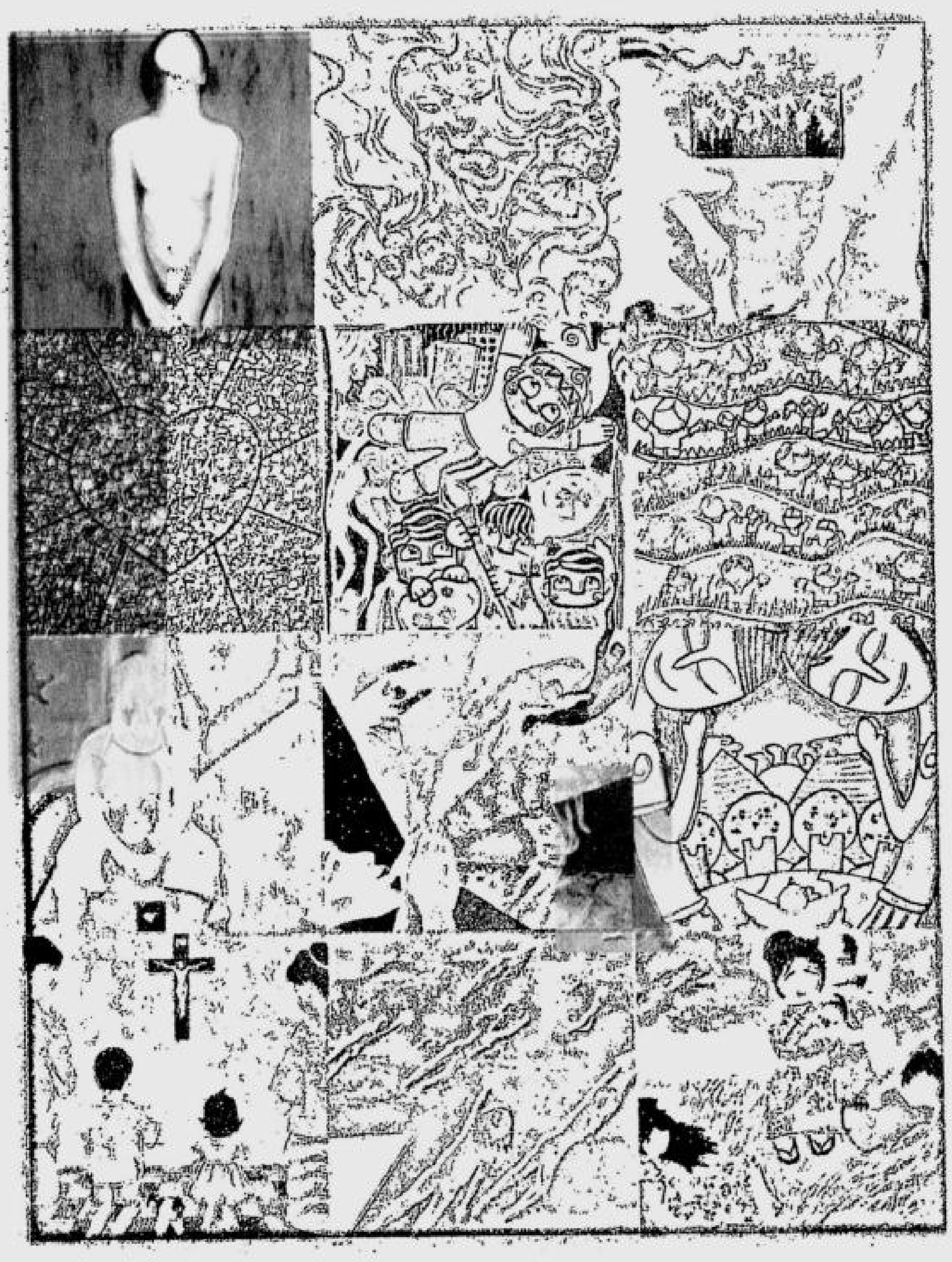

STROKES OF CREATIVITY

COLLEGE DIVISION

GRAND PRIZE WINNER
Joel L. Quiñones
Far Eastern University
Freedom of Expression and Self Extraction

RUNNERS-UP
Richard A. Magbual
Technological University of the Philippines
Magulo, Masikip Nguni't Masaya Dahil Sa Pag-ibig

Jessie James L. Lambatan
Technological University of the Philippines
Chubibo Ni Itay, Gabay Ng Buhay

Dario A. Boragay
Technological University of the Philippines
God Bless Us

HIGH SCHOOL DIVISION

GRAND PRIZE WINNER
Lorraine G. Datuin
Philippine High School for the Arts
Life: Unfurling From The Seeds Of Freedom

RUNNERS-UP
Jason M. Mondano
Manila High School
Soar High

Rina Lee J. Garibay
Philippine High School for the Arts
Ihip

Mariela Anne Monique M. Flores
Philippine High School for the Arts
Dress Code: None Required

GRADE SCHOOL DIVISION

GRAND PRIZE WINNER
Raynaldo P. Jaylo
University of Santo Tomas
Oras Para Sa Pamilya Humuhubog Ng Mabuting Bata

RUNNERS-UP
Reynold G. Del Mar
Antonio Regidor Elementary School
Mga Batang Masasaya

Darrie Mitzi P. Ong
Philippine San Bin School
Thank You For The Beautiful World We Live In

Juan Pablo D. Basilio
Ateneo de Manila University
Seeds Of Life

Colors of Life

Cocolife launched another first. The Colors of Life Student Visual Arts Competition, a nationwide art contest. Open to all students... grade school, high school and college. With over 400 submitted entries from all over the country, here are the winners and their interpretations on the theme "Freedom To Live Your Life".

Works of winners and finalists can be viewed at the lobby of the Cocolife building.
Exhibit runs from December 20, 2005 to January 2, 2006.

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InqBox Question of the Week

As the new year begins, what's your message to the politicians?

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inquirer box name/age/city/message.
(Maximum of 160 characters)

*Metro Manila winners can call Jane at 8978808 local 335. Provincial winners can text: inquirer ad name/age/city/mailing address to 2207 or 283 as their prizes will be mailed to them.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2005
PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER
A17

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STREET PLAY TOOTS SOBERANO/PDI NORTHERN LUZON BUREAU

While doing market errands, these two boys convert a plastic container box into a baby trolley, at the public market in Baguio City.

PNP says 'jueteng' back in Quezon

By Luige A. del Puerto, *in Manila*
and Delfin T. Mallari Jr., *PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

THE POLICE YESTERDAY CONFIRMED GOVERNMENT anti-jueteng czar Edward Hagedorn's report that the illegal numbers game was back in Southern Luzon.

A task force had been sent to three towns in Quezon province to go after "jueteng" runners, officials said.

The police learned that operators were trying to hide the illegal numbers game by conducting the draws in the hinterlands—away from the town centers.

"These are reliable reports. When [our men] got to the province, there were people collecting [bets] downtown. *May bumababa* (Someone would come down from the uplands)," said Chief Supt. Antonio Nanas, head of the police's anti-illegal gambling unit.

Nanas did not identify the towns they were checking because it could spoil ongoing anti-jueteng investigations.

Action sought

"[The operations] are not done in the poblacion (town center), but in outlying villages. They conduct the draws in the hinterlands. I have a team from Camp Crame [sent there] to pursue and follow-up," he said.

With news reports on jueteng's resurgence, Nanas said he was hoping the regional directors of areas named by Puerto Princesa Mayor Hagedorn would act.

The national headquarters had already asked ground commanders in Luzon to confirm reports of jueteng, Nanas added.

As of 2 p.m. yesterday, the police have yet to receive a report.

"We have not yet received [their] report," said Deputy Director General Avelino Razon Jr., who is deputy chief for operations (DCO) and Nanas' immediate superior.

Razon said the police's "one-strike policy" was in effect. Under this policy, a police chief automatically gets sacked if the national anti-illegal gambling unit successfully busts a gambling syndicate in his town or city.

Denial

But the police chief of Quezon province denied that organized jueteng operation has returned in the province.

"That's not true. We've been quite successful in our campaign against organized jueteng operation. What we have here in the streets gathering bets were collectors of EZ2 lotto, which is legal," said Senior Supt. Victorio Caragan Jr., Quezon police chief.

Operatives from the Anti-Illegal Gambling Special Operation Task Force based in Camp Crame raided a suspected jueteng draw den in the boundary of Barangay Ikirin and Bagumbungan in Pagbilao but found no illegal gambling operation.

Supt. Joe Conte, Pagbilao police chief, said the raiding team conducted the surprise operation without coordinating with the local police force.

"Apparently, they aimed to catch suspected jueteng employees. But we've been trying hard to keep this town jueteng-free," Conte said.

He said the Camp Crame operatives led by one Chief Insp. Maristelo Manalo investigated the village chair of Ikirin, Miguel Taksay.

"The barangay official swore to the group that jueteng had already stopped in his place two years ago," Conte said.

Caragan said he would immediately order all municipal police stations to conduct strict monitoring on the possible resurgence of jueteng operation in their respective areas.

Gov't vows to issue more ancestral land titles to claimants

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—THE National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) has vowed to be more aggressive in the processing and titling of ancestral land claims of the country's indigenous peoples and communities.

Jannette Serrano, NCIP chair, said the commission's thrust to speed up the issuance of ancestral land and ancestral domain titles was inspired by the current consultations on Charter change and the landmark Carino Doctrine that was explained and supported by the United States Supreme Court.

The NCIP, she said, is hoping that the consultative commission on Charter changes created by President Macapagal-Arroyo would strengthen the commission and set aside any proposal that would lessen indigenous peoples' rights as provided in the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (Republic Act No. 8371).

Serrano was the keynote speaker of the general assembly of indigenous women leaders in the Cordillera at the Benguet State University here on Friday.

"We will accelerate the delineation and award of ancestral lands," Serrano said. "We would like to see to it that when Charter changes are there, we are already on board together with ancestral domain titles."

In the last three months, she said the NCIP had approved the issuance of eight Certificates of Ancestral Domain Titles and one Certificate of Ancestral Land Title.

Serrano said the NCIP had always respected the Carino Doctrine, which recognized the ownership of ancestral lands by indigenous peoples.

The doctrine was explained by the US Supreme Court in 1909 in the case "Mateo Carino vs Insular Government of the Philippine Islands."

The US Supreme Court, through Chief Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, accepted Carino's "native title" over 146 hectares of land in Benguet which his family had used and occupied even before the Americans and other colonizers came. *Delmar Cariño, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Kin of Leyte landslide victims remember tragedy

By Jani Arnaiz
PDI Visayas Bureau

PANAON ISLAND, SOUTHERN Leyte—Simple rites marked the second anniversary of the killer landslides that hit three sites on Panaon Island on Dec. 19, 2003.

The tragedy, which killed more than 150 people, was commemorated with a Mass on Monday concelebrated by four priests. It was followed by a brief program preceded by flower offering and candle lighting at Pinut-an, in San Ricardo at 8 a.m.; Barangay Punta, San Francisco at 2 p.m., and Barangay Poblacion in Liloan at 4:30 p.m.

Southern Leyte Gov. Rosette Lerias attended the rites with the officials of the affected towns.

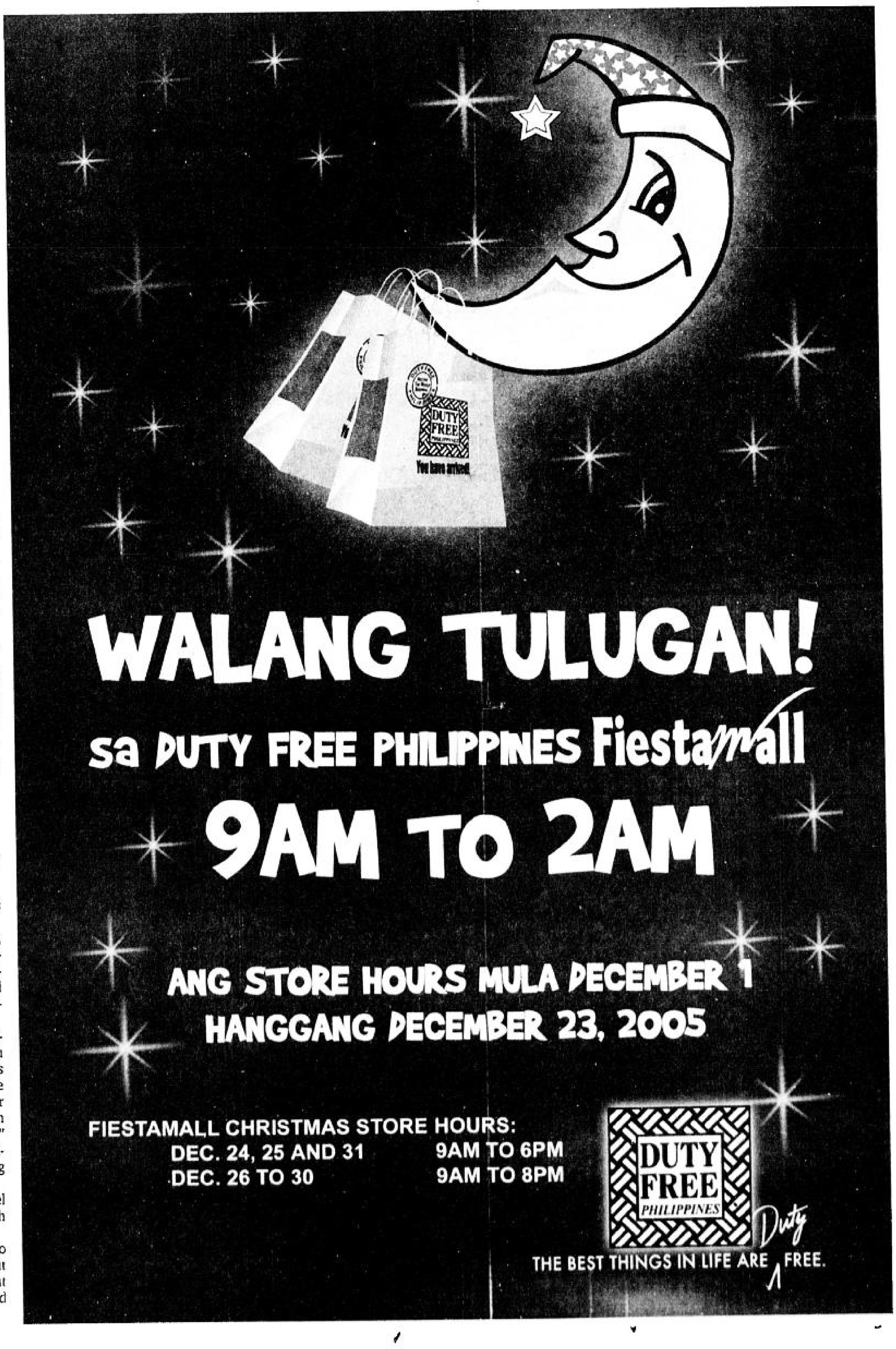
Except for Liloan, where the Mass was held at the town's parish church, the commemorations at Pinut-an (33 reported killed and missing) and Punta (89 killed and missing) were held in the areas where the tragedy struck.

Compared to last year's rites, the crowd has thinned down, particularly in Liloan, where 20 people had died, which was observed with no surviving relatives attending the Mass.

"We know that this is not a happy celebration, but we thank you for remembering your loved ones who are happy where they are now. Thank you for linking your relatives with this commemoration of what happened two years ago," said Pinut-an parish priest Fr. Angelo Abriol in his homily during Mass at the tragedy site.

The Mass was held in the chapel destroyed by the 2003 flood which has since been rebuilt.

After the Mass, San Ricardo Mayor Virginia Mejia led about 50 people in lighting candles at the marker for the victims erected in front of chapel.



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'Lumad' folk spend holidays in Davao

DAVAO CITY—HUNDREDS OF *lumad* (members of the indigenous communities) have descended to the city since November.

But unlike in previous years when many residents have maintained an indifferent attitude towards the caroling lumad, their experience this year is far more pleasant.

The reason: Mayor Rodrigo Duterte had asked them to come and share the spirit of Christmas with city residents.

HUNDREDS of Ata-Manobo, a gentle tribal group living in the hinterlands of Davao province, descended to Davao City to serenade dwellers here of their unique song and dance in a hope to get holiday presents. DENNIS JAY SANTOS/PDI MINDANAO BUREAU

As early as the first week of November, members of the Ata-Manobo communities from the hinterlands of the city and from as far as Bukidnon became a regular sight in the city's streets, asking gifts, used clothing and money.

Duterte said during his Sunday TV program over ABS-CBN that he invited the lumad folk to come and spend the holidays in this city.

"Transportation was made available just for them so they could make it to the city," he said.

Unlike in the past when the lumad spent their nights under the mercy of the weather, Duterte said he made sure that this year, they had at least decent places to stay.

"Their place to stay and provision and other needs are taken care of," Duterte said. They were also given health and medical services. This was the city's way of showing appreciation and concern to the lumad, who are descendants of the first settlers of Mindanao, he said.

"You feel the joy of giving," said Barangay 5-A Chair Edgar Ibuyan, who oversees the needs of the "visitors" encamped in his village.

Ibuyan said aside from the gifts they would receive, each family would also be given P2,000 in cash.

The money would be drawn from the city's fund.

"I came here with my daughter and husband to ask gifts because this is the only time we at least can have enough rice to eat and have clothes which we don't have much in our home," said Roxanne Kudiran, an Ata-Manobo.

Roxanne and her family took temporary shelter at a gymnasium in Barangay 5-A in Bankerohan district.

Even if this shelter does not look a bit like home, there is a smile among the children.

"At home we only eat corn and *kamote* (sweet potato), but here, we could at least enjoy rice and viand," Roxanne said.

Narciso Ambin, 30, also an Ata-Manobo, said although Christmas is not part of their culture, they have gone out of their way to join the celebrations. *Dennis Jay C. Santos, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Leyte gov't employees get incentive bonuses

By Joey A. Gabieta
PDI Visayas Bureau

TACLOBAN CITY—THE LEYTE provincial government is set to release this week around P20 million to be given to over 2,000 employees as their productivity incentive bonus for 2005.

Each of the employees will get at least P3,000 to P20,000, depending on the performance rating they received this year, according to provincial administrator Vincent Emnas.

On top of the 2005 incentive bonus, the 2,104 provincial government employees will also receive P2,000 each, representing their unrealized incentive bonus for 2004.

But unlike the flat rate bonus scheme adopted in 2004, the amount to be received by the employees this year would be based on the performance rating survey ordered by Gov. Jericho Petilla early this year.

Emnas said that a less than satisfactory rating could mean that an employee could receive P3,000 as his productivity incentive bonus while those who performed very satisfactorily could receive as high as P20,000.

Under the rating scale adopted by the provincial government, an employee who gets less than 7.5 as performance rating will receive P3,000. A rating of 7.5 to 8.49 is equivalent to a bonus of P6,000; and 8.5 - P8,000. Those who receive performance ratings above 8.5 will be richer by P20,000.

All casual employees who started working at the provincial government after June 30 this year or after the survey was completed would receive P3,000 as their productivity incentive bonus.

Emnas said those who received less than 7.5 performance rating were employees representing just about six percent of the Capitol's 2,104 workforce. This means that majority of the employees will each get a P6,000 bonus.

The bonus was expected to be released before today, Emnas said.

He said among the factors considered in the performance rating survey were the employees' attendance, work ethics or attitude, and compliance to the orders issued by the governor, like wearing proper office uniform and office ID.

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*IMS (PADDS), Dec. 2004 **Medical Journal of Diabetes Care Vol 27, No 1, Jan 2004 issue by Jarl S Torgerson MD, PHD, et al ***John Foreyt, PH D, Kristine Napier M PH, RD and Louis Aronne, M.D., F.A.C.P., The Xenical Advantage: How to use the remarkable new FDA-Approved drug to lose weight faster and keep it off Safely and Effectively (New York: Simon & Schuster Inc., 1999), 22-23

Gov't radio station in Kalibo gets bomb threats

ILOILO CITY—AN UNIDENTIFIED caller threatened to lob grenades at a government-run radio station in the capital town of Kalibo in Aklan last week raising fears of continued attacks against journalists.

The caller thrice called radio station dyRG of the Intercontinental Broadcasting Corp. and said three grenades will be lobbed at the station's compound on the eve of the Ati-Atihan Festival next month.

Augusto Tolentino, dyRG station manager, said their technician Joel Juliano received the first call at around 3 p.m. on Dec. 16. This was followed by another call two hours later.

He said the caller mentioned his name and their reporter Jujet Reyes and their reports on criminal activities in the province.

At around 3 p.m. on Dec. 18, a caller that sounded like the one who called the station two days earlier told Juliano that he would lob grenades at the station on Jan. 15.

"He even told our technician that it would be the biggest news during the festival," Tolentino told the INQUIRER in a telephone interview.

Tolentino and Reyes were not in the station when the calls were made. Tolentino suspected that they earned the ire of criminal groups for their commentaries against illegal gambling in the province.

Supt. William Macavinta, Aklan police director, said they were investigating the case and were determining the possible motive and the probable suspects.

The police have increased patrols in Barangay Agdagan where the station is located, he said. *Nestor P. Burgos Jr., PDI Visayas Bureau*

National Food Authority
Regional Office 10
Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City

Standard Form Number: SF-GOOD-05
Revised on July 28, 2004

RO10-2006-001
Supply of Trucking/Hauling Services

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The *National Food Authority Region 10*, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites Truckers / Hauler owners / operators / contractors to apply for eligibility and to bid for the hereunder project:

Name of Project	2006 Contracts for the Supply of Trucking/Hauling Services
Location	Cagayan de Oro City NFA Owned/Contracted Warehouses to NFA Bukidnon, Lanao Norte, Misamis Occidental, Camiguin & Lanao Sur Warehouses
Brief Description	Contract involves the hauling of bags of Rice from NFA Cagayan de Oro City to designated destinations.
Source of Rice Stocks	NFA Cagayan de Oro City Owned/Leased Warehouses/Pier Disport

LOT NO.	DESTINATION PROVINCE / WAREHOUSE	ESTIMATED VOLUME IN BAGS OF 50 kg	MINIMUM NUMBER OF TRUCKS REQUIRED	MINIMUM NET LOAD CAPACITY (BAGS) REQUIRED	RATE/ BAG OF 50 kg (Php)	APPROVED BUDGET CEILING (Php)
	BUKIDNON/					
1	GID AGLAYAN, MALAYBALAY	16,000	3	1,200	18.15	290,400.00
2	GID VALENCIA, VALENCIA	16,000	3	1,200	20.08	321,280.00
3	GID MARAMAG, MARAMAG	16,000	3	1,200	23.10	369,600.00
	LANAO NORTE /					
4	GID BARAAS, ILIGAN CITY	98,000	7	2,800	15.40	1,509,200.00
5	GID LALA, LALA	42,000	3	1,200	25.58	1,074,360.00
6	CAMIGUIN / LAKAS FLGC, MAMBAJAO	107,000	5	2,000	30.25	3,236,750.00
7	MISAMIS OCCIDENTAL / GID GANGO, OZAMIS CITY	160,000	8	3,200	31.90	5,104,000.00
8	MISAMIS ORIENTAL / CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY PIER DISPORT/ GID PATAG, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY GID BALOY AND BALOY LEASED WHSES, CAGAYAN DE ORO CITY	820,000 By lot of 82,000 Bags	4 per Lot	1,600 per Lot	4.51	3,698,200.00
9	LANAO DEL SUR / MARAWI CITY	40,000	5	2,000	22.28	891,200.00

Prospective bidders should have experience in undertaking a similar project within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding, and have key personnel and equipment (owned) available for the prosecution of the project. The list of minimum equipment requirement is indicated in the Eligibility Forms. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids, shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-Bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post-Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed, as follows:

ACTIVITIES	ADDRESS	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Bid Documents	2/F, NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	December 19, 29, 2005	8:00 AM – 5:00 PM Working Days
2. Pre-Bid Conference	Conference Room 2F NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	January 5, 2006	1:30 PM
3. Deadline for Submission & Receipt of Eligibility Requirements & Bid Documents	Conference Room, 2F NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan de Oro City	January 16, 2006	1:30 PM
4. Opening of Bids	Conference Room, 2F NFA-10 Regional Office, Baloy, Cagayan De Oro City	January 16, 2006	1:35 PM

Bid Documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of a non-refundable amount of **Three Thousand Pesos** Only (P3,000.00) per contract to the Cashier of the National Food Authority-Cagayan de Oro City.

The National Food Authority, Region 10 assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

The *National Food Authority, Region 10* reserves the right to accept or reject any Bid, and to annul the bidding process and reject all Bids at any time prior to contract award, without thereby incurring any liability to the Bidders.

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(PDI – December 16 & 23, 2005)

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IDEXX
DIAGNOSTIC PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

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Couple feeds Laguna poor every Christmas Day

CALAMBA CITY—A COUPLE HERE, WHO requested anonymity, has been feeding the "poorest of the poor" families in Laguna for about 10 years now.

The couple started distributing food items for *noche buena* in a barangay in Calamba City sometime in 1995.

The husband-and-wife team expanded its Christmas *noche buena* giving to Victoria town and this year, it is sending food items to the poorest folk in Pangil town.

The couple coordinates with priests and nuns in preparing the gift packages.

They choose the best rice grains, which they give away together with spaghetti, corned beef and other food items needed by very poor families to celebrate Christmas.

The couple prepares at least 200-300 bags of food items.

The lawyer-husband used to remind his friend-priests or nuns in beneficiary areas not to discriminate against the benefactor because of his or her religion.

"During Christmas let us remember that Christ loves the most neglected ones even if he/she is not Catholic. Let us feed those who are very hungry," he said.

The donor businessman must have been vividly aware of Christ's words in the Scripture that says: "Whenever you did this to one of the least, of these my brothers, you did it to me" (Mt. 25:40).

He said it makes them happy to be a part of alleviating the hunger of so many families even if only for a day.

He said they knew what it feels to suffer and be hungry when they themselves became fire victims in 1994.

The husband, a lawyer, said they were doing this without fanfare to thank God for the blessings the family has received.

Particularly, the couple is thanking God for the recovery of the losses they incurred during a big fire in Calamba City market on Dec. 31, 1994.

Almost all their commercial outlets in the city, filled with stocks in preparation for the New Year, were reduced to ashes in that fire, the husband recalled.

He said his wife had a nervous breakdown because of the huge damage that they suffered in that fire.

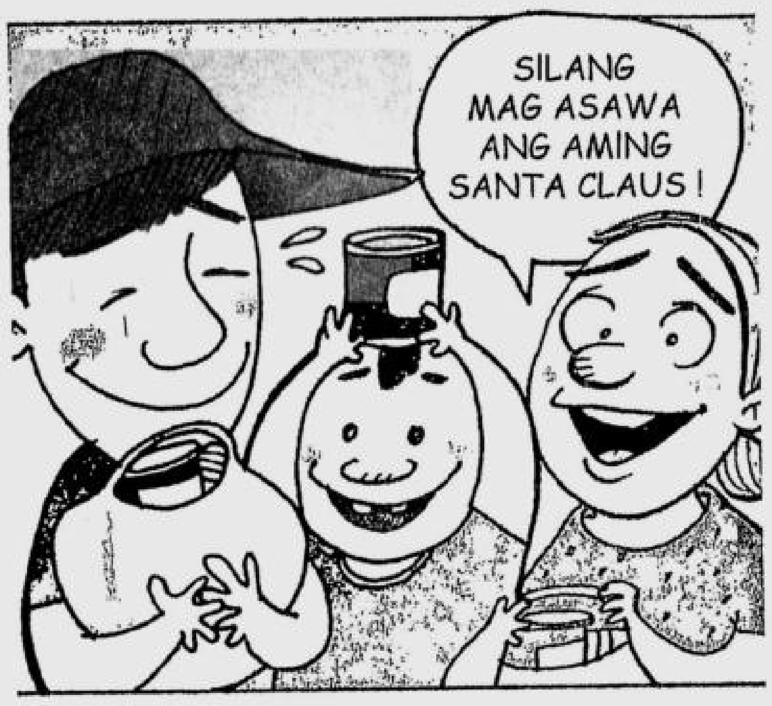
Although they and their only daughter came out alive from the disaster, the wife had almost given up hoping they would recover from the catastrophe.

But the husband, who was trained in a Catholic university in Manila, said he kept telling his spouse that there was plenty of hope.

The couple then embarked on a "trial and error" scheme ,to bounce back from the serious drawback to their business.

After a few months of praying, trying and experimenting on various options, the couple finally found the answer to their predicament when they acquired a property, which became the foundation for their renewed business vitality.

"I really believe in the power of prayer," the husband is frequently heard saying to his friends. *Romulo O. Ponte, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*



ROUNDUP

Most rape victims minors

DUMAGUETE CITY—Three of four victims of rape in Negros Oriental this year were minors. Records of the Negros Oriental Police Provincial Office here showed that of the 63 rape cases reported to the Women and Children Concerned Desk (WCCD) from January to November this year, 49 were minors. The report also showed that five of the rape cases with children as victims were incestuous. PO2 Philameda Jaluag, acting WCCD chief, said there were 16 cases of acts of lasciviousness and eight attempted rape of children. The total number of crimes against children in the province reported to WCCD during the period was 137. *Romy Amarado, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Militiamen hurt in clash

COTABATO CITY—Three militiamen were wounded in an encounter with Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) rebels in Rajah Buayan town in Maguindanao on Saturday. The militiamen are under the operational control of the Army's 604th Infantry Brigade. Kabalu said the militiamen attacked their member Edu Maulana and his followers in the outskirts of Barangay Pedsandawan. Macalay is also the village chief of Pedsandawan. "It will not affect the ongoing talks. The incident stemmed from land conflict," said Kabalu. *Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

Japanese found dead

GENERAL SANTOS CITY—The Japanese national who went missing here about two weeks ago was found dead in Padada, Davao del Sur. Senior Supt. Antonio Toroctocon said Yasaki Sawada was obviously strangled. Found near the Japanese national's cadaver on Dec. 11 was a tie wire, which was used in killing him, according to Toroctocon. He said the police identified the cadaver based on Sawada's photo, copies of which were distributed to police in southern and central Mindanao. Sawada, who was in the tuna business, arrived in General Santos City on Dec. 7 along with another Japanese, Yohida Satoshi. *Aquiles Z. Zonio, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

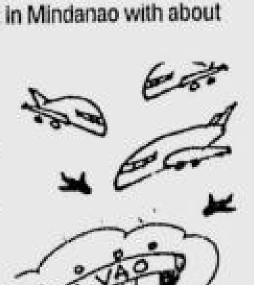
Firecracker blast kills 1

CEBU CITY—A man working for an illegal firecracker factory in Barangay Babag, Lapulapu City was killed when a drum containing pyrotechnic ingredients exploded. Marjun Baguio, 23, of Cogon, Cordova, was walking along the road in Purok Rambo, Barangay Babag when the explosion happened, according to Lapulapu City Police Chief Supt. Louie Oppus. Initial investigation showed that the drum was owned by a certain Dexter Casol who allegedly accepted sub-contract deals to make firecrackers from Teresita Pepito, another illegal firecracker maker in the area. Baguio was declared dead on arrival at the Lapulapu City District Hospital. *Jhunnex Napallacan, PDI Visayas Bureau*

Indian shot dead

SORSOGON CITY—An Indian national was shot dead here late afternoon on Dec. 16 in what investigators suspected could be a vendetta killing. Police said Jaswant Singh, alias Lucky, 47, a resident of Catmon St., Sts. Peter and Paul Ville Subdivision in this city was shot dead by a lone gunman as he emerged from Galver Institute of Technology at Barangay Tugos at about 5:15 p.m. after attending the Christmas party of his nieces. The victim suffered four bullet wounds in his left arm and the nape, said Dr. Inocencio Lee Jr. City police chief Supt. Formoso Argarin said Lucky was touted as the leader of a group of Indian nationals who clashed with another group of "Bombays" whose leader was also slain a month ago. Lucky's twin brother, Jazzie Singh, was also killed by a lone gunman two years ago while collecting payments from his clients at Barangay Ponong, Casiguran, Sorsogon. *Bobby Q. Labalan, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Busy Davao airport



DAVAO CITY—The Davao International Airport (DIA) remains the busiest airport in Mindanao with about 875,000 passengers served during the first semester of the year, the Mindanao Economic Development Council (MEDCo) said. MEDCo, which is tasked with plotting development programs for Mindanao and monitor the island's economic growth, said 52 percent of passengers traveling by air entered Mindanao through the DIA while the Lumbia Airport in Cagayan de Oro City had a 15.73 percent share or 266,370 passengers served during the same period. *Judy Quiros, PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Coal mine firm faces suit from victims' kin

By Jhunnex Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—FAMILIES OF MINERS killed in the Dec. 10 coal mine explosion in Dalaguete town planned to sue the Ibalong Resources Development Corp. (IRDC) for damages.

The plan to file charges against the company came amid allegations of safety lapses raised by one of the sons of the victims.

Alejandro Sanchez, 21, son of Jaime Sanchez, one of the six trapped miners whose body was one of the three retrieved Tuesday, claimed that inspectors of the Department of Energy (DOE) did not inspect the mine tunnel allegedly because they were bribed by the Taiwanese-owned firm.

Alejandro claimed the mining company did not follow the regulation of a 10-meter distance between wooden raises or blocks inside the tunnel.

Alejandro said IRDC's mine tunnel adopted a five-meter distance between raises, which he claimed was risky in case of methane explosion because it would have a domino effect on the other blocks inside the tunnel.

He said he would file charges against Ibalong after the burial of his father.

Relatives of other victims said they would also decide the possible filing of charges against IRDC after the burial of their relatives this weekend.

DOE-Visayas regional director Antonio Labios, however, denied allegations the agency's inspectors had been bribed so that IRDC could continue its operation despite its alleged failure to follow the safety guidelines inside the tunnel.

Labios stressed there is no standard distance between the wooden raises, saying other coal mines even adopted the 3-meter distance.

Labios said he understood that relatives of the victims were in grief and were blaming the mining firm for the accident.

But he said Ibalong did follow safety standards, which was the basis for granting the firm its coal operating contract.

Labios, however, said the coal mine will remain closed even after the retrieval operation because of the pending investigation of the Dec. 10 explosion.

Dalaguete Mayor Ronald Alan Cesante said the body of Francisco Ybañez, 43, from Barangay Dumalan, was recovered by members of the rescue team led by Cebu Provincial Fire Marshall Supt. Anderson Comar and the miners of Ibalong.

Cesante said the rescue team was still conducting retrieval operation in order to dig up the bodies of two other miners—Gregorio Amad, 35 of Ablayan, Dalaguete and Manuel Lanogan, 45 of Canlawilao, Dalaguete.

Cesante said the body of Ybañez was found in between raise 9 and raise 10.

He said the rescue team was conducting clearing operation at raise 10 and at the tip of the 490-meter tunnel, where the bodies of Amad and Lanogan were believed to have been trapped.

HOLIDAY RUSH
JOFELLE P. TESORIO/PDI SOUTHERN LUZON BUREAU
Just like others, this wheel-chair bound man joins the Christmas rush to buy his groceries for "noche buena." Despite his disability, he is often seen in the streets of Puerto Princesa City, bringing smiles to everyone.

Indigenous folk seek transparency in free trade talks

BAGUIO CITY—REPRESENTATIVES of Cordillera indigenous peoples have urged government representatives in the sixth ministerial conference of the World Trade Organization last week in Hong Kong to be transparent on the agreements reached in the meeting.

"We do not want to wake up one morning to news that our government had sold our country to the WTO. We hope that the government would tell us about the agreements made [in the WTO conference] because we do not want our farmers to be displaced [in the global market] and our workers retrenched," Windel Bolinget, secretary general of Cordillera Peoples Alliance, said in a forum here on Wednesday.

Bolinget said agriculture would always remain a contentious issue in the WTO as long as local farmers are shortchanged in the global trade.

He said farmers, especially those in the major vegetable producing towns in the Cordillera, suffered losses when imported vegetables flooded the market due to trade liberalization.

Guilt

Virgie Dammay, a member of the farmer's group Apit-Tako, said farmers who joined the International Rural Peoples Tribunal during the WTO protests on Dec. 15 in Hong Kong found the WTO "guilty" for destroying agriculture in developing countries and endangering food security.

Vernie Yocogan-Diano, secretary general of Innabuyog-Gabriela, said testimonies from farmers and fishermen from Thailand, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Indonesia, India and the Philippines during the protests told of the WTO's intrusion into their livelihood.

Among the cases cited were the introduction of imported seeds, fertilizers and pesticides by agrochemical industries from the United States and Europe, the displacement of fishermen due to the entry of foreign fishing trawls, and the displacement of villagers due to large-scale mining.

Lopsided policies

"We are convinced that the growing poverty in the country and absence of jobs for Filipino workers and professionals are a result of lopsided economic policies and programs of Philippine government [that are] biased to the interest of foreign corporations and businesses and to institutions [that favor] globalization and WTO policies," a statement from the Cordillera Migrant Workers said.

"We are calling on the Philippines to get out of the WTO. The gap between the rich and poor [countries] is getting wider with global powers taking over the [developing] countries' resources," Bolinget said. *Desiree Caluza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

Order to end contracts on trees gets flak

By Romy G. Amarado
PDI Visayas Bureau

DUMAGUETE CITY—A FEDERATION of at least 54 people's organizations in the province are protesting the order of Environment Secretary Michael Defensor to cancel several Community Based Forest Management Agreement (CBFMA) in the province due to low or unsatisfactory performance.

In an undated resolution, the Tree Planters Federation of People's Organization of Oriental Negros, whose members were issued CBFMAs by the government beginning 1992 claimed that the order was unconstitutional.

The group added that the order was "in complete disregard of the program of CBFMA" which was funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1985, in conjunction with international covenants and treaties.

The resolution will be forwarded to Defensor and to the Office of the President. Its signatories included not only those whose CBFMAs were canceled but also those who were not affected by the order.

Defensor issued a memorandum dated Nov. 30, copy of which was received by the Community Environment and Natural Resources Office (Cenro) here last Dec. 14, instructing the Department of Environment and Natural Resources in Central Visayas (DENR-7) to order the cancellation of some 31 CBFMAs covering about 8,000 hectares in the province because of "unsatisfactory performance and were used as fronts of illegal logging activities."

CBMFA is a tenurial arrangement issued by the government to people's organizations for them to protect, develop and grow the trees in reforested areas covered by the agreement.

In return, CBFMA holders get 75 percent of the proceeds of the trees that will be harvested from the area. The remaining 25 percent goes to the national government.

The agreement covers a period of 25 years and renewable for another 25 years.

The 16,000 hectare-CBFMA area in the province used to be a reforestation project in Oriental Negros, which received P150 million from Asian Development Bank and Overseas Economic Cooperation Fund, now called Japan International Bank Cooperation.

AIR FORCE personnel have their hands full in their rescue mission in Mindoro.
REUTERS

Mindoro execs rush repair of dikes

CITY OF CALAPAN—THE PROVINCIAL government said it will start the rehabilitation of the 1.2-kilometer dike in Sitio Buhuan, Barangay Bucayao on Dec. 27 to solve the flooding in the city and neighboring areas.

This developed after Gov. Arnan C. Panaligan met with Department of Public Works and Highways 1st District engineer Jovy Santos, provincial engineer Elmer V. Dilay and representatives of concerned agencies on Tuesday.

Panaligan ordered Dilay to prepare the necessary equipment for the rehabilitation of the dike.

The provincial government will use its own funds for the project.

Dilay said the project cost will amount to P8 million, if the cost of acquiring the 16-hectare land near the dike will be included.

The next move, he said, will be the rechanneling of the Bucayao river with a cost of P5 million, which was pledged by 1st District Rep. Rodolfo G. Valencia from his congressional fund.

It will be implemented by the DPWH and will start on Jan. 15.

The third step will be the construction of a permanent in summer next year at the Mt. Aglubang-Mt. Ibulo river junction and also in Mt. Muyot where it is estimated that a big volume of water flow down to the Bucayao river at Mag-asawang Tubig river.

The DPWH has estimated the cost to reach P65 million. Some P5 million will come from the initial release of the National Disaster Coordinating Council.

Meanwhile, the National Irrigation Administration will make a 451-meter gabion armoring with a height of eight meters from the water bottom and will be at the riverbank level.

It is estimated to cost P33 million, P10 million of which will be released this month for the 200-meter initial construction. The balance of P23 million will be released next year.

According to engineer Wilfredo Balauro, the gabion armoring involves the placing of stones in formed wire with the size of "1 x 1 x 4" meters and with a height of eight meters.

This will strengthen the river bank against possible erosion of the soil under the dike during strong river flows.

It will be recalled that more than 300 meters of Buhuan dike were destroyed by the strong river current in this city on Dec. 7 as a result of continuous rains from Dec. 5 and the flow of water from the mountains.

The provincial government immediately repaired the destroyed 300-meter portion on Dec. 13.

The dike was being repaired when typhoon "Quedan" hit the province on Dec. 17.

The Task Force Noah composed of personnel from Ateneo, Asisi Foundation and Mirant's Project Mercury came to Calapan early morning yesterday and distributed relief goods to Naujan and Baco towns.

About two truckloads of goods amounting to almost P1 million reached Calapan at about 7 a.m., said Benjamin Abadiano, newly-installed president of Asisi Foundation and coordinator of the assistance. *Madonna T. Virola, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau*

Nuns help prove new rice breed healthier

BAGUIO CITY—THE LATEST magic bullet to combat malnutrition has the blessings of Filipino nuns. In fact, they were made the test subject of a new study showing the effectiveness of iron biofortified rice which was also developed at the International Rice Research Institute.

The study by a team of Filipino and American scientists and published by the American Society of Nutrition in the Journal of Nutrition showed that the body can indeed absorb the iron in this variety of biofortified rice.

The IRRI developed IR68144-2B-2-2-3 through conventional breeding techniques. Described as high-yielding, the rice provided 17 percent more dietary iron than the local varieties tested.

The new variety is expected to fight iron deficiency or anemia which affects mostly women and children in developing countries.

Anemia does not only stunt children's mental and physical development but is reported to be the culprit behind the death of 60,000 women who die during pregnancy or childbirth because of the severe lack of iron in the blood.

Anemia prevalence

The Fourth Report of the World Nutrition Situation published by the United Nations said 3.5 billion people in developing countries are iron deficient based on levels of blood hemoglobin (Hb) that reflect anemia. Anemia prevalence among women of reproductive age is estimated at 44 percent in developing countries.

In the Philippines, 32 percent of women between 15 and 49 years old are anemic and about three-fourths may be iron-deficient.

Common strategies included the taking of iron supplements and iron fortification of the food supply, something which the poor can sometimes do without.

Nutritionists around the world at first doubted if the iron biofortified rice can indeed be stored in the body.

No study can otherwise disprove their doubt until this study, which is titled "Iron-Biofortified Rice Improves the Iron Stores of Nonanemic Filipino Women."

Scientists used nuns as test subjects because they can easily be monitored and their diet is representative of most Filipinos.

ILLUSTRATION: ALBERT RODRIGUEZ

The study noted that the typical Filipino diet is based on rice as a staple. Rice accounts for 41 percent of daily dietary energy intake and 33 percent of per capita food consumption.

"This high level of rice consumption combined with the availability of an experimental rice variety that has significantly greater iron content provides the first opportunity to test the effect of consuming a biofortified staple food crop on the micronutrient status of humans," it noted.

Ideal subjects

"The study was carried out among young women in training to become religious sisters of the Roman Catholic Church. Subjects were chosen from convents located near Manila."

It added: "We selected this population because they represent a segment of the population at high risk for iron deficiency, they consume large quantities of rice, and their meals are prepared in a common kitchen and consumed in a common dining area. Their diet is typical of those in the Philippines and their activity pattern similar to that of lay people."

Eventually, about 200 nuns were tested while the rest of the respondents served as the control. The control group was fed the popular rice variety known as C4 while the other was given the biofortified rice.

The nuns who ate the iron biofortified rice had a significantly higher iron levels in their blood than those who took ordinary rice. *Frank Cimatu, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau*

‘Silahis ng Pasko’ . . .

From page A1

thought of this project," he said.

He also produces the annual sports awards, in which the city's outstanding sports achievements are given due recognition.

Sunshine

Silahis ng Pasko remains Padilla's most enduring project because he has managed to keep a healthy sense of humor about it.

"I am not gay, OK?" he declared. "'Silahis' means 'radiance of the sun,' but I have gotten used to the jokes. I am old-fashioned, so 'silahis' to me means 'sunshine.'"

Padilla said the project was initially conceived as a Mardi Gras, a lantern parade and multiple concerts simultaneously dazzling residents and tourists alike.

"I produced a living Christmas tree—the first of its kind north of Manila at the time," he recalled. "I constructed a giant winding platform on which a large choral group stood to form a Christmas tree. And they sang beautifully for the best and richest of Baguio."

Padilla said this confluence of activities occurred decades before city businessmen gave full backing to the Panagbenga Flower Festival in 1995, essentially to also woo tourists back to Baguio.

Low gov't support

That was the first and last time Silahis wore that much glamour.

"It suffered from low government support, and I felt it was my duty to keep it going. But to do that, I had to keep it humble," Padilla said.

He said Silahis had been kept afloat by a group of friends in the business and political community.

"I had to pawn my camera at one time to finance some of the gifts of Silahis. I felt bad [that I had to scrape bottom], but it was my obligation to keep it running," he said.

One day this month, contestants from Baguio's community of the disabled shared a meager snack in between sack races until Good Samaritans began putting coins and P100 bills into five clay pots, which the children broke that same afternoon.

"That's how Silahis survives—from the city's good soul, from the bottom of my heart," Padilla said.

Recall of EO creating energy superbody urged

From page A1

Surigao del Sur Rep. Prospero Pichay said the President was "ill-advised" in issuing Executive Order No. 474, which created the Strategic Oil, Gas, Energy Resources and Power Infrastructure Office that would be headed by Energy Undersecretary Peter Anthony Abaya.

"The President … was ill-advised. If they think Popoy Lotilla is not fit for the job, then why not find a replacement?" Pichay said.

The University of the Philippines Law Center's Institute of Human Rights also denounced EO 474 as an attempt by Abaya to usurp the powers of his boss.

"Using a so-called strategic office, he (Abaya) wants to wrestle power from his own boss by dragging the unsuspecting President along with it," Jeffrey J. Roden, a research associate of the institute, said in a statement sent to the INQUIRER.

But Abaya is unaffected by all the flak he has been getting since Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita announced his appointment on Wednesday.

"I will not step on anybody's toes," Abaya told the INQUIRER in reaction to speculations that the newly formed agency would encroach on the powers of the Department of Energy, Philippine National Oil Co. and Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM).

Pichay said creating a superbody to take over most of Lotilla's functions might result in "duplication of functions."

‘Not as strong’

Abaya said his critics were fussing about nothing, pointing out that the agency was not a superbody at all.

"It's not going to be as strong as the DOE. In fact, it will have fewer functions than the DOE has now," he said.

The EO says nothing about taking over the PNOC's job in developing oil and gas resources or the Psalm in privatizing power generation and transmission assets," he said. "It will just promote and assist in fast-tracking the implementation of private sector-led projects."

Abaya said the new body would also craft the "operational program" for the energy crisis plan, in tandem with the DOE.

Although the department has its own Philippine Energy Plan, Abaya said his office would be more focused on short-term solutions.

‘Bureaucratic layer’

Critics lambasted the oil and energy superbody as an "unnecessary bureaucratic layer" that has only left industry players and prospective investors more confused about the government's thrusts in the energy sector.

Pichay said he was not aware of the reasons behind the order but said it might be related to the privatization of financially troubled National Power Corp. (Napocor).

He said he had called for an investigation of Napocor's privatization since the giant power firm was selling power generating units individually instead of in groups as stated in the Epira Law (Electric Power Industry Reform Act).

"The EO should be recalled and the Palace should assign somebody who can do the job," Pichay said.

Since the energy secretary had already filed a letter of resignation, the Palace should just accept it, he said. "If he has a resignation letter, then they should find a replacement instead of creating another bureaucracy."

GMA initiative

Roden claimed that the creation of the office was meant to satisfy Abaya's thirst to grab power from his boss as Abaya was rumored to have drafted the EO himself.

Abaya insisted that the order was the sole initiative of the President, although he admitted to giving inputs to her. He said he had yet to receive his appointment paper.

The UP Law Center noted Abaya's dismissal from his post as director of the Environmental Management Bureau for granting "fly-by-night entities engaged in women's apparel, realty corporations and land surveyors" with import permits to bring in ozone-depleting substances in excess of legal limits.

Abaya said the Department of Environment and Natural Resources had already cleared him of the charges.

He claimed that the charges were concocted by his rivals who wanted to ease him out of the department in 2001 for being an appointee of then President Joseph Estrada.

GMA donated . . .

From page A1

ported on the donation made during the launching of the reformatted Radio Veritas in August.

He was upset that the report might undermine the value and wisdom of the Pondo ng Pinoy, an ambitious program intended to prod people to help the poor through regular savings of at least 25 centavos daily. The fund supports a feeding program and livelihood micro-projects for the poor in the Manila diocese.

Defining the problem

"It's not about the money," Rosales explained. "The problem is the outlook, the perspective, the conviction of the people (toward the poor)."

Critics questioned the timing of Ms Arroyo's contribution, which came less than a month after the Catholic Bishops Conference of the Philippines released a pastoral statement declaring its refusal to join calls for the President's ouster but advising her not to ignore them altogether.

Asked about Ms Arroyo's possible political motivation in giving the donation, Rosales replied: "Whether it came from the devil, it didn't [get] to me."

‘Un-Christian’

Rosales described as "un-Christian" the exclusion of sinners and their possibly honest contributions, noting the Gospel teaching on Jesus walking and dining with such individuals.

He also suggested that media should be interested, not in "scoops or in making a hit," but in "sharing the truth."

"I would want to elevate your profession to something higher because you're talking about truths," he said. "It's your calling and it's almost like a vocation."

Rosales asked that media be more objective "without lessening guilt" and without ignoring occasions of "evil, injustice or lies."

"If I were a journalist, I would not accommodate my ideas into what I know is true and hard facts," he said.

"I say this to my brothers-priests, too. That you preach not your ideas but the ideas of Christ."

Mayor's face glows . . .

From page A1

lampposts along Edsa in his city.

The specially designed *parol* (lantern) has generated various reactions from local residents.

"I thought only the image of the Baby Jesus could be mounted on a parol," Eva Reyes, a cigarette vendor near the Monumento Circle, told the INQUIRER in Filipino.

Maricel Tagle, an Echiverri supporter, said the lantern with the mayor's picture looked "nice."

Reached for comment by the INQUIRER last night, Echiverri explained that instead of writing down his message, his face was being displayed as the "Merry Christmas message."

Gift to residents

The lanterns were a gift from the local government to the residents, said Alvin Feliciano, head of the city's press information office.

When asked about the expense, Feliciano said: "Half of the cost was donated by private individuals while the other half was paid for by the city."

Former Caloocan Rep. Edgar Erice had only disgust for the lanterns. He ran for mayor in 2004 and lost to Echiverri.

"The mayor's photo could be seen everywhere—as if Christmas was all about him and not about the birth of Christ," Erice told the INQUIRER in a phone interview.

"Why would my political rivals deprive the people of Caloocan of well-lit streets? Besides, I have made it my mission in Caloocan: *Bawal ang nakasimangot sa* (No frowning in) Caloocan," Echiverri said.

Power theft?

Erice also accused Echiverri of "possible power theft" and urged Meralco to charge the mayor with violating Republic Act No. 7832 (Anti-Electricity and Electric Transmission Lines/Materials Pilferage Act of 1994).

"He has illegally tapped Meralco lines with his promotional lanterns. This clearly violates existing power laws," Erice said.

He added that the city paid Meralco a fixed amount for the power consumption of every bulb in a lamppost. Any connection aside from the bulb is considered "pilferage."

"A check with Meralco [showed that] the city owes P51 million in unpaid electric bills for about seven months," Erice said.

He said local officials who "connived and colluded" in the pilferage must be included in the complaint.

Echiverri denied the charge of illegal tapping of electricity.

"There was prior arrangement with the Meralco Caloocan-Malabon branch. The local government of Caloocan will be billed additional during the Christmas season—a 20-day period when the *parols* are connected to the lampposts," he said.

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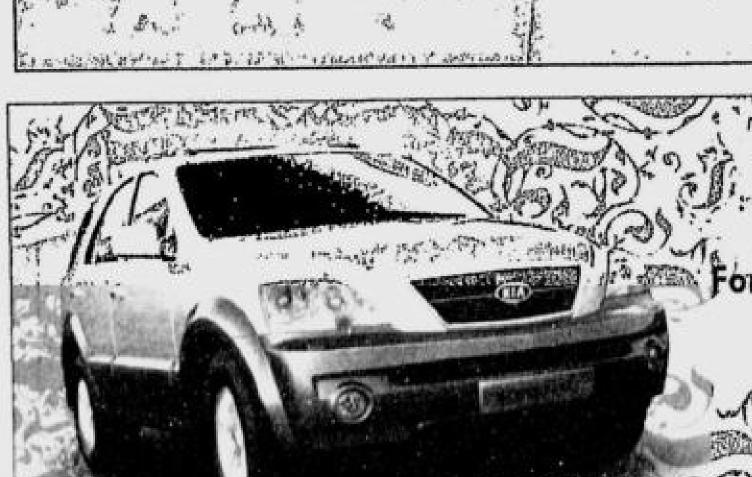

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Holiday road diggers face sanctions

By Leila B. Salaverria

CONTRACTORS VIOLATING the month-long ban on road diggings in Metro Manila will have a difficult time getting a permit for future projects.

According to Robert Lala, DPWH-National Capital Region Director, the contractors' future requests for permits could be denied if their disregard for the ban causes severe problems.

"There are no hard and fast rules on what the penalties should be on those who go against the ban. But if we see fit, perhaps we could deny the violators' requests for future permits," he said.

Traffic jams

He also said the ban was imposed for a good reason—to minimize traffic jams during the holidays—and should be followed strictly.

"Even a minor road excavation is enough to affect the traffic flow, and the motorists get angry at us. This is why the ban should be followed by everyone concerned," Lala added.

The DPWH, as well as the Metro Manila Development Authority, implemented a moratorium on road excavations in the metropolis earlier this month in light of the increasing volume of vehicular traffic.

Exception

Only emergency work, like those involving public utilities, would be allowed to push through.

The DPWH ban ends on Jan. 16.

Lala added that with the recent suspension of the Unified Vehicular Volume Reduction Program (UVVRP), which is expected to further increase the number of vehicles on the roads, there is a need to ensure motorists that activities which affect traffic flow are kept to a minimum.

The UVVRP, or number-coding scheme, restricts cars from major thoroughfares once a week depending on the last digit of their plate number. It is usually implemented from Monday to Friday, but was suspended starting this week.

New case against ABS-CBN

By DJ Yap and Jerome Aning

RETRENCHED EMPLOYEES OF broadcast giant ABS-CBN's news department have filed a class suit against the network for allegedly terminating their services with no legal basis.

In their complaint with the National Labor Relations Commission in Quezon City, broadcaster Gene Orejana and eight others sought reinstatement, moral and exemplary damages, 14th and 15th month pay, vacation and sick leave credits, among others.

They said the network violated the Labor Code when it declared their positions "redundant."

They alleged ABS-CBN hired replacements on a contractual basis, negating the redundancy argument.

Orejana said the "quit claim" waivers they signed that forbade them from seeking employment with competitors of Lopez-owned companies for one year after separation were "unjust, unreasonable, unfair."

Though ABS-CBN declined to comment on the new case, early this month it denied charges of illegal dismissal.

"ABS-CBN categorically states that its former reporters and employees who filed cases... accepted an early retirement package and received the necessary benefits for their years of service," the network said.

The other complainants were news correspondent Rowena Orejana, news production manager Norma Susanna Cueva, executive producers Ana Marie Fuderanan and Jose Mario Fuderanan, DZMM correspondent Wilfredo Perez Jr., desk editors Michael Sadim and Ma. Salome Salazar, and field production head Enrico Tuazon.

Named respondents were ABS-CBN president Luis Alejandro, news and current affairs chief Maria Ressa, radio division head Peter Musngi, human resources head Philbert Berba and Mark Nepomuceno.

The employees' counsel, Jose Suratos, said many provisions of the Labor Code were circumvented because instead of new workers, veteran employees were dismissed.

Suratos said his clients also questioned the legality of the quit claims waiver they had signed.

Bike cops collar 2 suspected thieves

By Jocelyn R. Uy

THE BIKE PATROL IN BF HOMES Parañaque City seems to be working.

The BF Police Bike Patrol, created recently to beef up security inside the subdivision, collared two alleged members of a "*Bukas Kotse*" Gang.

Police identified the suspected thieves as Jericho Lumberio, 21, and Jayson Catungal, 19, both residents of Bethlehem Street in Barangay San Isidro.

The alleged theft happened at 3:30 p.m. on Dec. 13 in front of the Vita Clear Water Station on Aguirre Avenue. The BF Bike Patrol saw the suspects opening the glass window of the water station's green Mazda pick-up with plate number XTP 157.

The two allegedly took the cell phone of delivery boy Philip dela Peña. The police arrested the suspects and recovered the phone.

It was found out later that a warrant of arrest for Lumberio had been out since 2003.

"I commend the members of the BF Bike Patrol for their quick apprehension of these two thieves...," Mayor Florencio Bernabe said in a statement.

The local government, despite opposition from security-conscious members of the homeowners' association, had opened to motorists the subdivision's El Grande and Aguirre Avenues to ease traffic on Sucat Road.

HI TECH CAROLERS
Singing Christmas songs for motorists on Roxas Blvd., Pasay City, this brother-and-sister team dresses their act with the help of recorded instrumental music. EDWIN BACASMAS

A family's 16-year Christmas 'tradition'

By Tarra V. Quismundo

FOR 16 YEARS NOW, MILA CAEL and her children have made it a tradition to ask for gifts from employees at the Makati City Hall, undeterred by closed doors and unwelcoming looks.

"*Hangga't pwedeng mamasko, gagawin namin. Hindi naman masamang mamasko, di ba? Talagang kakapalan na lang namin ang mukha namin para manghingi* (For as long as we could, we would ask for Christmas gifts. It's not wrong, is it? We just need the guts to do so)," said Cael, 43.

The mother of four said her family could barely raise the money for their daily needs.

Her husband is out of work. Cael earns some money doing laundry for other people.

"This has been our practice every Christmas since the birth of my first-born son, Christian, who is now 16. At least we would have money to buy food for Christmas, and to buy clothes and shoes for my children," Cael said.

With sons Carlo, 8, and Crisanto, 5, Cael was at the old Makati City Hall at noon yesterday, hoping to collect more cash from employees.

She and the kids arrived on Dec. 14 from her hometown, Rodriguez, Rizal, and are staying at a cousin's house in Barangay Guadalupe Viejo.

Though turned away by security guards and employees several times, Cael was never discouraged. Besides, she said, it was a profitable enterprise.

"In a day, I would earn between P400 to P500. On better days we get P600 to P700. But in the past, we got as much as P1,300 a day," she said.

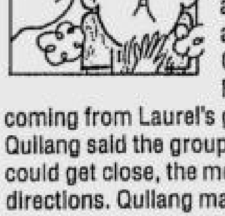
So far, she was able to save P300 for her efforts, Cael said.

METROBRIEFS

Not for reel

A TV personality was accused of throwing punches at a band member in Quezon City before dawn yesterday. Timothy Mark Eigenmann (screen name: Sid Lucero), son of actor Mark Gil, allegedly attacked Miguel Alcaraz, 24, a member of the rock band Chico-Sci, outside a bar on Katipunan Avenue in front of the Ateneo de Manila University campus. But his manager said it was likely a case of "*away bata*" (childish fight), which should be easily settled by both parties. Alcaraz said the attack might have been about his former girlfriend who is now Eigenmann's current partner. The alleged victim told police he was talking to his friends at about 1:30 a.m. when Eigenmann, 22, accompanied by a girl, approached them. The actor allegedly began hitting Alcaraz in the face and head, but was later pacified by Alcaraz' friends, said SPO1 Roberto Cajiles of the Anonas Police Station. Cajiles said physical injuries charges were being readied against the actor. But Eigenmann's manager, Ricky Gallardo, expressed optimism that the matter would be settled out of court. *DJ Yap*

Scent gave him away



ONE SECURITY guard's sharp sense of smell led to the arrest of a suspected drug user inside an upscale nightspot in Makati City at dawn yesterday. Operatives of the Makati Police Department's Station Anti-Illegal Drugs unit (MPD-SAID) filed charges of drug use against Jose Martin Laurel, 25, who was caught while allegedly smoking marijuana within the premises of Greenbelt 3 in Ayala Center yesterday. Watchman Francisco Quilang had noticed the smell of marijuana coming from Laurel's group as they walked toward the mall's lagoon area. Quilang said the group quickly broke up as he approached. But before he could get close, the men threw away the cigarette, and then ran in different directions. Quilang managed to catch up with Laurel who was immediately turned over to the MPD-SAID. *Tarra V. Quismundo*

'Spellbound' in Manila

"SPELLBOUND," America's famed magic show, is coming to Manila in time for the holiday season. The show consists of three unique specialty acts, an ensemble of 14 dancers, and of course, lots of magic to leave audiences bewitched, breathless and bewildered. Manila audiences will surely be enthralled by this multi-awarded production which opens on Dec. 25. The show is a Dick Foster production with the participation of VIVA Concerts and Events and the Araneta Coliseum. Tickets are available at Ticketnet (911-5555) at SM Department Stores and the Araneta box office.

Metro mayors get chance to play Santa

INSTEAD OF THE USUAL GIFT bags of toys and candies, more than 45,000 elementary students in Marikina City received dictionaries and handbooks from their city government this Christmas.

Mayor Marides Fernando went around the city's 17 public elementary schools for two weeks to distribute the 250-page English-Filipino pink dictionaries. The students also got copies of parent-student handbooks, also colored pink.

In Mandaluyong City, more than 45,000 poor residents lined up for orange pails full of groceries from the city government yesterday. Mandaluyong City Mayor Neptali Gonzales II distributed the pails filled with corned beef, tuna, sardines, rice, salt, sugar, milk and coffee. About 20,000 residents of Valenzuela City, on the other hand, received bags of groceries for "a simple *noche buena* feast," according to Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian.

The activity would also be an opportunity to interact with residents during the yuletide season, the mayor added. *Edson C. Tandoc and Nancy C. Carvajal*

3 fires leave 1 dead, hundreds homeless

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A 90-YEAR-OLD WOMAN DIED died and hundreds of families lost their homes as a result of fires in two depressed areas and a commercial establishment in southern Metro Manila in the past two days.

The first fire broke out in a two-story boarding house on St. Paul Street, Lopez Village, Barangay San Isidro, Parañaque City shortly before 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, SF01 Teodorico Gatchalian told the INQUIRER yesterday.

Casualties

About 50 families were left homeless and damage was estimated at P200,000.

Meanwhile, fire investigators said Benita Balle, 90, died in a fire that razed a squatter colony on Tramo Riverside corner Virata Street in Pasay City at 9:10 p.m. Wednesday.

The family of the late William Binasa was unable to save his body when the fire quickly spread to the area where a wake was held for him.

About 400 families were left homeless and some P15 million worth of property went up in smoke. Some fire victims sought shelter in a nearby church and a school on E. Rodriguez Street.

Faulty wiring

Another blaze that started at 12:54 p.m. yesterday destroyed a two-story commercial complex on National Road in Barangay Poblacion, Muntinlupa City.

Damage was estimated at P1.4 million.

Arson investigators suspected faulty electrical wiring as the cause of the fire.

THE DAILY GOSPEL

Friday, December 23, 2005
4th Week of Advent

1st Reading: Mal 3:1-4,23-24
Gospel: Luke 1:57-66

When the time came for Elizabeth, she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the merciful Lord had done a wonderful thing for her and they rejoiced with her.

When on the eighth day they came to attend the circumcision of the child, they wanted to name him Zechariah after his father. But his mother said, "Not so; he shall be called John." They said to her, "No one in your family has that name"; and they asked the father by means of signs for the name he wanted to give. Zechariah asked for a writing tablet and wrote on it, "His name is John," and they were very surprised. Immediately Zechariah could speak again and his first words were in praise of God.

A holy fear came on all in the neighborhood, and throughout the Hills of Judea the people talked about these events. All who heard of it pondered in their minds and wondered, "What will this child be?" For they understood that the hand of the Lord was with him.

Commentary

Back to Elizabeth and Zechariah and the birth and naming of their child. His name is John as the angel commanded—it is time to obey the Word of God. And in obeying Zechariah's tongue is loosened and he begins to speak again by praising God. This child is entrusted to them, but from the beginning the hand of the Lord is with him. What is your name? What does it mean (John is beloved of God)? Is it time for you to obey the word of God? And as parents do you remember that your children have been entrusted to you but they must be about God's work in the world? God's hand is always with us now.

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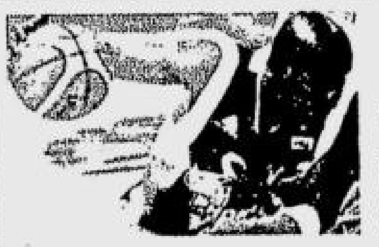

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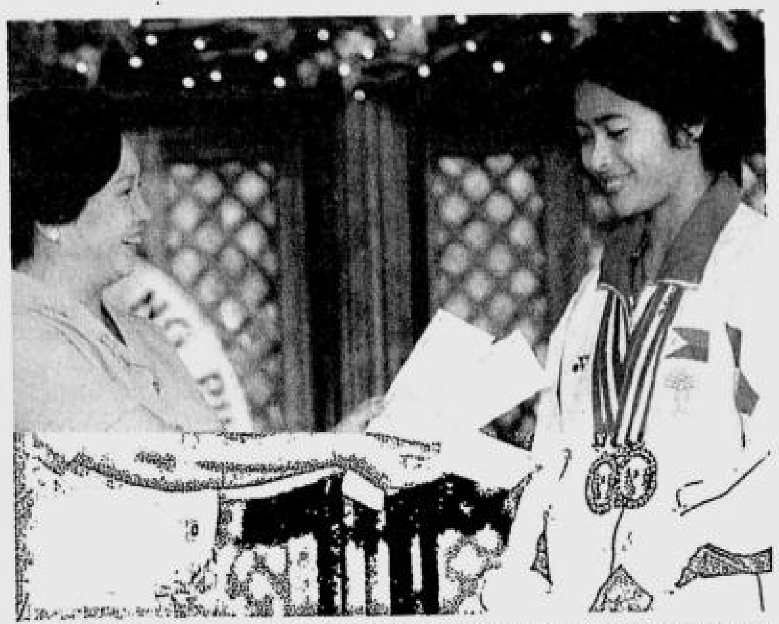

PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo hands over three checks for P250,000 to diving's three-gold medal winner Shiela Mae Perez during ceremonies in Malacañang yesterday. The President handed out checks totaling about P20 million to SEA Games medalists. LYN RILLON

THE PRESIDENT congratulates actor Richard Gomez and the rest of the national fencing team for winning five gold medals. LYN RILLON

President: Focus on 10 sports in Beijing

By Marc Anthony Reyes

AFTER THE 113-GOLD DELUGE IN THE RECENT Southeast Asian Games, the Philippines will now concentrate on 10 sports that will be heavily funded in hopes of scoring an Olympics breakthrough in the 2008 Beijing Games.

"Our budget must be focused on sports where we have good chances of winning our first Olympic gold medal," said President Macapagal-Arroyo yesterday before handing out checks totaling close to P20 million to the athletes who secured the first SEAG overall title for the country.

The athletes arrived just a few hours after returning from their Hong Kong holiday—a bonus promised them by First Gentleman Mike Arroyo, who raised, through his FG Foundation, the fund they used to prepare for the SEAG.

Mr. Arroyo accompanied some 200 athletes in the three-day vacation, including a visit to Hong Kong Disneyland.

Only a handful of athletes, however, will be given the honor of going for the Olympic gold in Beijing, with the President emphasizing boxing three times as the sport that is the most likely source of that elusive honor.

"Boxing must get more budget," said Mrs. Arroyo, who also mentioned archery, diving and taekwondo as Olympic medal prospects.

Boxing came up with eight golds during the SEAG, four each from the men's and the women's team. The winners—Alice Kate Apari, Annie Albania, Jouvelen Chilem, Michelle Martinez, Juanito Magliquian, Harry Tanamor, Joan Tipon and Genebert Basadre—got P100,000 each.

Swimmer Miguel Molina, who is back at the University of California Berkeley where he is an international relations senior, was the top earner with a total of P350,000. He took three individual gold medals and one silver.

Diver Shiela Mae Perez came in second in terms of earnings, getting P250,000 for her two individual gold medals and a third gold she shared with Ceseil Domenios.

Other big winners were rower Benjie Tolentino, cue master Rubelyn Amit and gymnast Roel Ramos with P200,000 each.

Billiards king Alex Pagulayan, now with his family in Canada, won P175,000.

The coaches of the winning athletes will also get about P10 million in cash incentives under Republic Act 9064.

Boxing official Roger Fortaleza expressed delight over the President's special mention of his sport, saying "this will surely inspire us to work even harder."

The President also urged the Philippine Sports Commission to be selective in sending athletes for training in China to make sure that the use for the funds is maximized.

PSC chair William "Butch" Ramirez said he would ask the Philippine Olympic Committee and the national sports association to determine the rest of the 10 elite sports which the country will concentrate on, aside from those picked by the President.

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Easy outing for Barako; TNT-SMB up

RED BULL BARAKO SEEK A PLAYOFF SPOT for the second automatic semifinal berth when they take on the import-less Coca-Cola Tigers today in the San Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Coach Yeng Guiao and the Barako are heavily favored to win the 4:40 p.m. contest and match the second-running 9-7 card of idle Air21 with the Tigers expected to sorely miss the suspended Omar Thomas.

Aside from the one-game ban, Thomas was fined P150,000 for a deliberate elbow on the head of Dennis Espino of Sta. Lucia Realty that opened an ugly gash that required several stitches to close as tempers flared in their game last Sunday.

Talk 'N Text will also try to keep its hopes alive for the outright semis slot when the Phone Pals tangle with the San Miguel Beermen at 7:25 p.m.

The Beermen and the Tigers share the cellar at 6-9 and, if both teams lose, they collide in what has been called a survivor's duel to decide who makes it to the wild card phase.

Under the present ranking, the Beermen are running No. 8, which means they need just one win over No. 9 in the survivor's clash to advance while their opponents have to prevail twice to stay alive.

With only the Christmas Day contest between Barangay Ginebra and Alaska left in the schedule, only the first semifinal slot won by the Purefoods Chunkee Giants (10-6) has been established.

A four-way tie for the second slot is possible if Red Bull, Talk 'N Text and Ginebra win their last games.

Under this setup, the Barako and the Gin Kings would end up taking the No. 2 and 3 slots based on the quotient system, with the Phone Pals and the Express finishing third and fourth.

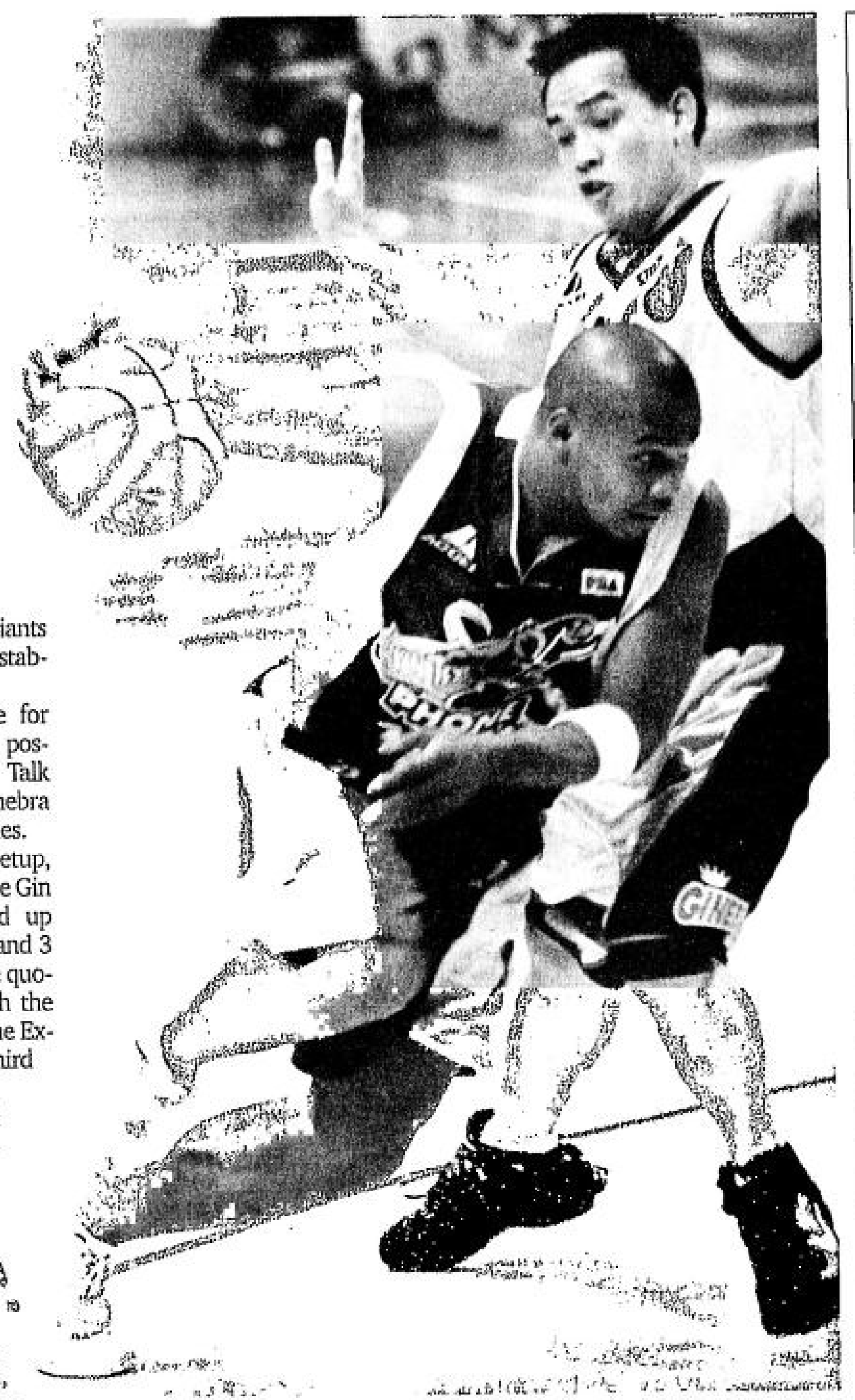
Red Bull and Ginebra then collide in a playoff for the second semifinal berth with the loser settling for the first quarterfinal slot. Talk 'N Text and Air21 will meet in another playoff with the winner seizing the second quarterfinal slot and the loser falling into the wild card phase as No. 5.

The wild card battle will have No. 5 facing the survivor of the No. 8-vs-No. 9 duel, with No. 6 meeting No. 7 in the other pairing.

The two wild card survivors advance against the two quarterfinalists. *June Navarro*

STANDINGS	W	L
*Purefoods	10	6
Air21	9	7
Talk 'N Text	8	7
Ginebra	8	7
Red Bull	8	7
Alaska	7	8
Sta. Lucia	7	9
Coca-Cola	6	9
San Miguel	6	9

GAMES TODAY
(*Cuneta Astrodome*)
4:40 p.m.—Red Bull Barako vs Coca-Cola
7:25 p.m.—San Miguel Beer vs Talk 'N Text



TALK 'N TEXT'S Willie Miller drives past Barangay Ginebra's Mark Macapagal during their game Wednesday. The Kings won, 97-92. RUDY ESPERAS

On the wings of words

By Percy D. Della

COMMENTARY

SQUINTED MY WAY TO THE BEACHfront this morning. Still wedged between dreams and daybreak, I needed to be roused by the roar of the waves.

Planned to wake up early to compose a sports commentary, though I didn't have a clue as to what to write about this fine day.

Then a passage about words and how they "could take you to places so glorious and so far"—from an autobiography by a Pulitzer Prize winner—clicks in the mind.

So here I am at the computer and not sweating blood trying to come up with an appropriate topic. The keyboard is on autopilot, pounding away an ode to sportswriters.

Sportswriters belong to a closed-knit clan. Words run in the family. Action words to be exact are a rich inheritance handed down from one generation of sports scribes to the next.

With action words, sportswriters record events with pens as blazing as those of war correspondents; or as moving and heartfelt as those of soap opera writers who can summon a tear or a smile on cue.

Sportswriters can be mischief-makers too, if they so please. There is no doubt about that. After all, they too lap up bad news, especially when important people display a propensity to provide it.

But sports scribes answer to a higher calling—to help us understand our dreams and sorrows through athletic competition. Sports after all serves as a metaphor for life.

Save for members of Congress with an itch to junket on our dime, sportswriters are, arguably, the most traveled segment of our community. They span and scan the globe for what broadcast great Jim Mackay calls "the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat" that stare our sports stars in the face.

Which brings us to the muse that inspired this piece.

To sportswriters, words are indeed a gift of gold. Words are their way out, out of the country, that is. On the wings of words, they could go to faraway places so distant "that even your own kin could only gape in wonder and envy," according to that Pulitzer Prize winner in his book.

The book, actually a chronicle of how the author rose from a lowly police reporter to a New York Times columnist—reminds of a local scribe. While in his prime, the scribe was sent to America to cover a soccer tournament. He liked it there so much he stayed for about 30 years.

He's back from America for good. On the wings of words, he brings you this tribute to the sports writing community in general and to sportswriter-friends in particular.

After all, friends as the comedian Jerry Seinfeld says—"are the DNA of society. They are the basic building blocks of life. If you have a couple of good ones treasure them like gold. There's nothing better."

Merry Christmas to one and all!

Sports Note: Hermie Rivera has good news for Louie Espinosa diehards. At long last, the former two-time champion has been given his green card by the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service. Now Hermie says Louie "can come over and go after the crooks, to "kayo the grinches" who refuse to pay his championship money from eight years ago.

Alcantara advances to 14-under Masters

RISING STAR FRANCIS CASEY ALCANTARA will represent the Philippines in the Asian 14-under Series Masters starting Dec. 30 in Melbourne, Australia.

Alcantara, the country's top 14-and-under campaigner from Cagayan de Oro, amassed a total of 860 points from a series of 14-under international tournaments this year to claim the sixth spot in the elite eight-boy field. Eight girls from all over Asia also made the grade.

All the qualifiers will also compete in the Optus National Teams Event in Gosford as well as the Ambassadors' Cup in Kooyong.

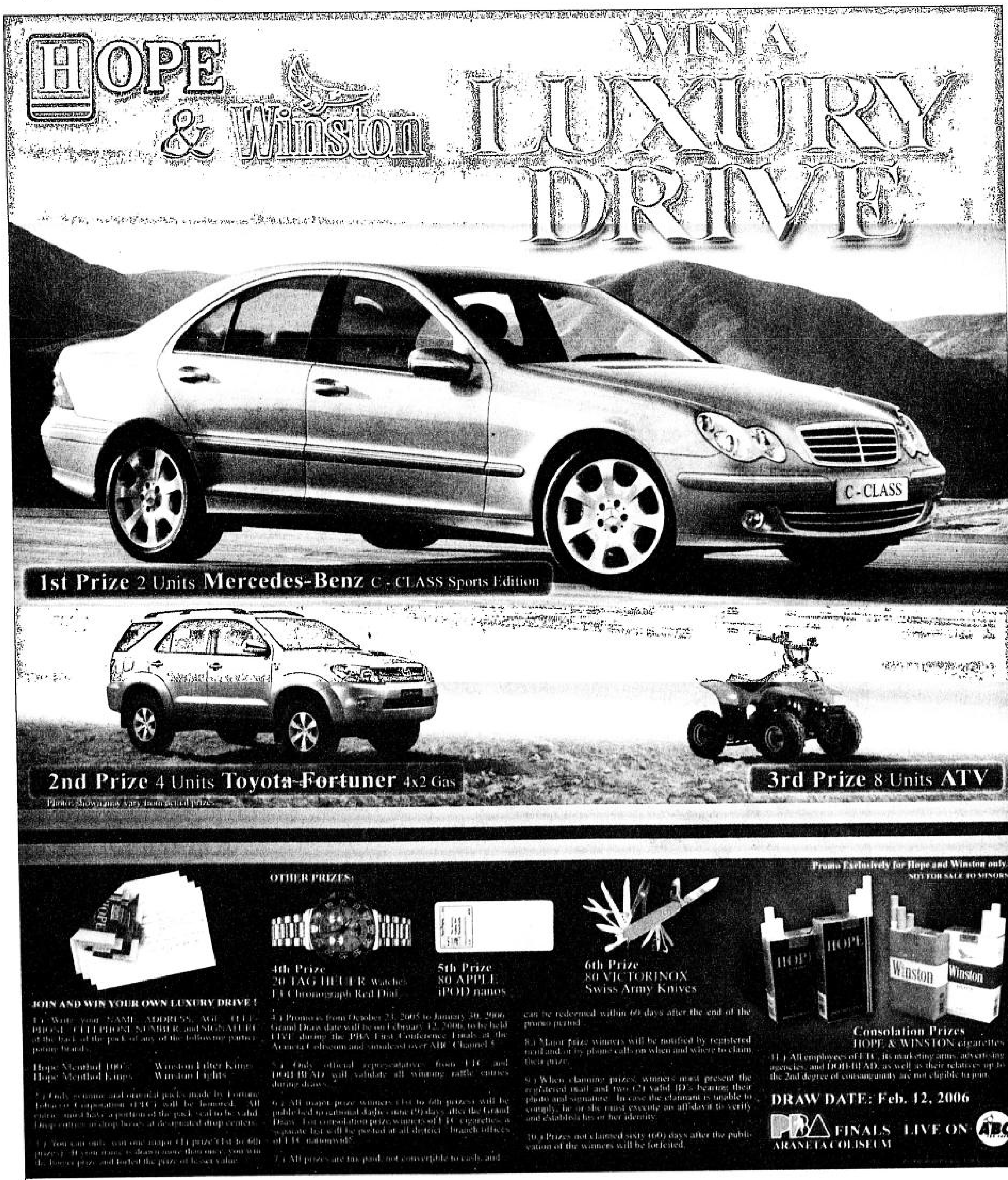
Joining second-timer Alcantara in the boys' division are Pattayu Champet of Thailand, Indians Sudanwa Sitaram, Ronak Manuja, Mansingh Athara and Sameer Paranjape; Tito Parulian Hutsuruk of Indonesia and Abdulnour Bronou of Syria.

Foreign stints up in LL elims

THE CHANCE TO REPRESENT THE PHILIPPINES IN prestigious baseball and softball tournaments abroad will be up for grabs as the Little League Philippines hosts an elimination series in the cities of Talavera, Cabanatuan and Palayan in Nueva Ecija on April 21-30 next year. Eighty-six teams have already confirmed participation in the eliminations, including 30 in the 11-12 years old bracket, where the winning team gets the chance to wear the RP colors in the Aspac-Guam tournament in July.

Pasay 4-cock derby today

COCKFIGHTING ENTHUSIASTS ARE EXPECTED TO converge today at the Pasay City Cockpit for the Christmas Bigtime 4-Cock Derby which sizzles at 6 p.m. More than 80 fights are on tap in the derby which has Sagupaan Complexor 3000 as exclusive sponsor. Top derby campaigners are vying in the event, according to host Renato Sio. At stake is a cash pot of P300,000 for an entry fee of P10,000. For inquiries, call 816-6750, 843-1746 or 843-1890.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Coseteng pads Driver of Year overall lead

JODY COSETENG FAILED TO TOP ANY OF THE TWO Races last weekend but still padded his lead in the Driver of the Year race of the Philippine National Touring Car Championship 2005 at the newly redesigned Subic International Raceway.

Coseteng, driving for SMC-Erg Alcotonic, wound up fourth and second in rounds 5 and 6 but still pulled away with 132 points in Group 1 of the series sanctioned by the Automobile Association of the Philippines.

Arch rival Enzo Pastor of Team TEC-Eneos and Kookie Ramirez of Petron Ultron-SRA, who was disqualified in Round 6, shared second place with 107 points.

Philip Alvendia of A3 Motorsports/Malayan Automasters Team was fourth overall with 82 points, followed by Carlos Anton of MP Turbo and Louis Ramirez of Petron Ultron-SRA with 74 and 58, respectively.

Then came Dennis Uy of Velocity Motors-Race Fans Racing Team with 44 points and Gabby de la Merced of Big Shot Billiards with 38.

With three legs or six races to go, organizers say the scenario can still change dramatically.

"It's too early to tell [who will top the series]," said PNTCC organizer and Race Fans Inc. president Richard Santos. "Considering the intense rivalry among the drivers and teams, anything can still happen."

The Group 3 race is equally close with Renan Morales of Shift Racing, Peewee Mendiola of Big Chill Racing Team and Miguel Lazaro of Velocity Motors-Race Fans Team figuring in a three-way battle for top honors.

Despite engine problems in Round 6, Morales remained on top with 125 points, although both Mendiola and Lazaro were still in contention with 107 apiece.

Dominic Tan of Velocity Motors-Race Fans Team was fourth with 64 points, followed by lady driver Menchie Francisco of Petron Ultron-SRA and Bingo Valero with 62 and 58, respectively.

The last three legs are slated Jan. 15 at the Batangas Racing Circuit, and Feb. 11 and 12, and March 4 and 5, both at the Subic International Raceway.

IN COMMAND: Jody Coseteng

GOLD medalists (front row from left) Tshomlee Go, Marie Antoinette Rivero, Kerstin Elaine Alora, Esther Marie Singson, John Paul Lizardo and Donald David Geisler III with (standing, same order) VP for marketing Jose K. Campos Jr., Petron chair Nicasio I. Alcantara, PTA VP and chief instructor Hong Sung Chon and Petron marketing services GM Joselito de Jesus.

Cash bonanza for SEAG taekwondo medal winners

VICTORIOUS TAEKWONDO JINS IN THE 23rd Southeast Asian Games have received additional cash rewards from longtime supporter Petron Corp.

A backer of the national team since 1998, Petron recently gave out P75,000 each to the six gold medalists, P40,000 each to the five silver medalists and P20,000 to the lone bronze medalist who secured for the RP jins the overall championship of the SEAG competition.

These incentives were apart from the P100,000 that each gold medalist stands to get from the Philippine Sports Commission. The PSC is also rewarding silver medalists P50,000 each and bronze medalists P10,000 each.

"More than the accolades that you have received, you have inspired our next generation of athletes to show the same hard work, dedication, discipline and sacrifice," Petron chair Nicasio I. Alcantara told the jins during simple awarding rites at the Petron MegaPlaza in Makati.

"We hope that our continuing support of the national team, in cooperation with the Philippine Taekwondo Association, will encourage you to bring more glory to the country."

National coach Noli Gabriel said private sector support is a big factor in the jins' success, adding that Petron's financial support is "being used by the team for foreign exposure."

According to Charmaine V. Canillas, Petron advertising manager, the company has also been supporting football and beach volleyball.

Filipino taekwondo jins who bagged golds in the 23rd SEAG were John Paul Lizardo, Tshomlee Go, Donald David Geisler, Esther Marie Singson, Kirsti Elaine Alora and Mary Antoinette Rivero.

The silver medalists were Dax Alberto Morfe, Michael Alejandrino, Veronica Domingo, Alexander Briones and Ma. Criselda Roxas. Sally Solis accounted for the lone bronze.

So stars as Tagaytay B tops team chess elims

Final elimination round standings:

14.0 points—Tagaytay City B; 12.0—SCA-Cabuyao, Tagaytay City A; AFP A; 11.0—Filway-Time Life, AFP B, Marikina; 10.0—Dingalan Ecology, Gandia of Asia, Tabilog Cargo Service; 9.0—Equiparco Const. B, Alabang, Philippine Navy, UP Dream Team; 8.0—Surigao del Sur, Bacoor Wizards; 7.0—Equiparco Const. A, Darea Kiosk; 6.0—Equiparco Const. C; 3.0—Mabalacat; 1.0—Makati Youth

WHIZ kid Wesley So delivers the crucial point for Tagaytay B. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

CHRISTMAS IS FOR KIDS. AND FOR Fide Master Wesley So, a 12-year-old chess whiz, he showed his elders that a pre-Chistmas tournament is his turf.

So, the youngest titled player in the field, yesterday led lightly regarded Tagaytay City B of Mayor Abraham "Bambol" Tolentino Jr. to a 2.5-1.5 victory over Tabilog Cargo Services and the top ranking after the elimination round of the Prospero "Butch" Pichay Chess Challenge at the Celebrity Sports Plaza in Quezon City.

So waylaid veteran International Master Richard Bitoon on Board 1, while teammate Truman Hernaez downed Raymond Salcedo on Board 3. On Board 4, Allan Macala settled for a draw against Nelson Villanueva to cushion the loss of Edmundo Gatus to FM Jesse Noel Sales on Board 2 and secure the win for Tagaytay B.

SCA-Cabuyao, led by former RP junior champion and National Master John Paul Gomez, took the No. 2 spot following a 3-1 whipping of Armed Forces of the Philippines B, 3-1.

Gomez drew with NM Darwin Laylo on Board 1, even as NM Rolando Andador, also a former RP junior champ, halved the point against Deniel Causo. Edsel Montoya and Dino Ballecer delivered the clinching points for SCA-Cabuyao. Montoya topped Carlo Magno Rosaupan on Board 3, while Ballecer turned back Noel dela Cruz on Board 4.

The No. 3 spot in the crossover semis went to reigning national inter-cities champion Tagaytay City A, which forced a 2-2 draw against Filway-Time Life.

Grandmaster Joey Antonio stopped fellow GM Mark Paragua on Board 1, while IM Chito Garma duplicated Antonio's feat by beating NM Oliver Barbosa on Board 2.

Samson Lim and Christian Arroyo forced the tie for Filway-Time Life by posting win in the lower boards. Lim downed Jerry Areque on Board 3 while Arroyo stopped Ilann Perez on Board 4.

AFP A, led by IM Ronald Dableo, earned the No. 4 berth following a 3-1 dumping of Gandia of Asia Cargo.

Dableo, the former Asian Zonal champion, led AFP's rout with a win over NM Jerome Balico, while Allan Cantonjos and David Elorta also won. NM Andrew Vasquez averted a shutout with a win over FM Rico Salimbagat.

SCA-Cabuyao, Tagaytay A and AFP A actually emerged tied with similar 12-point totals, but SCA-Cabuyao took the No. 2 spot by virtue of a higher game-point total of 22. Tagaytay A had 21, while AFP A collected 20.5.

In the crossover semifinals going on at presstime, Tagaytay B was battling AFP A, while SCA-Cabuyao was tackling Tagaytay A. The winners will then clash for the title of the P500,000 tournament.

Marlon Bernardino, contributor

Although its been said many times, many ways

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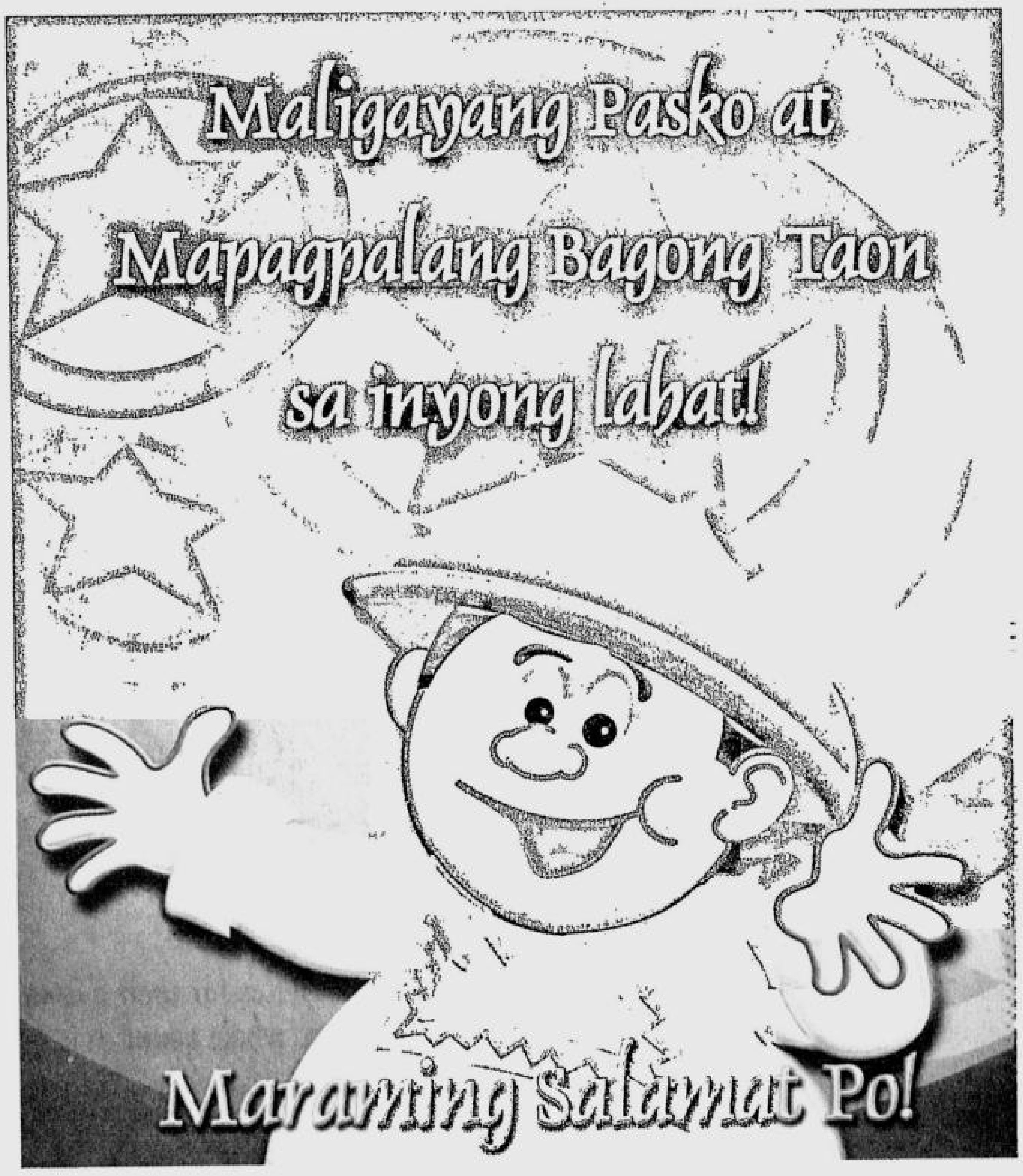
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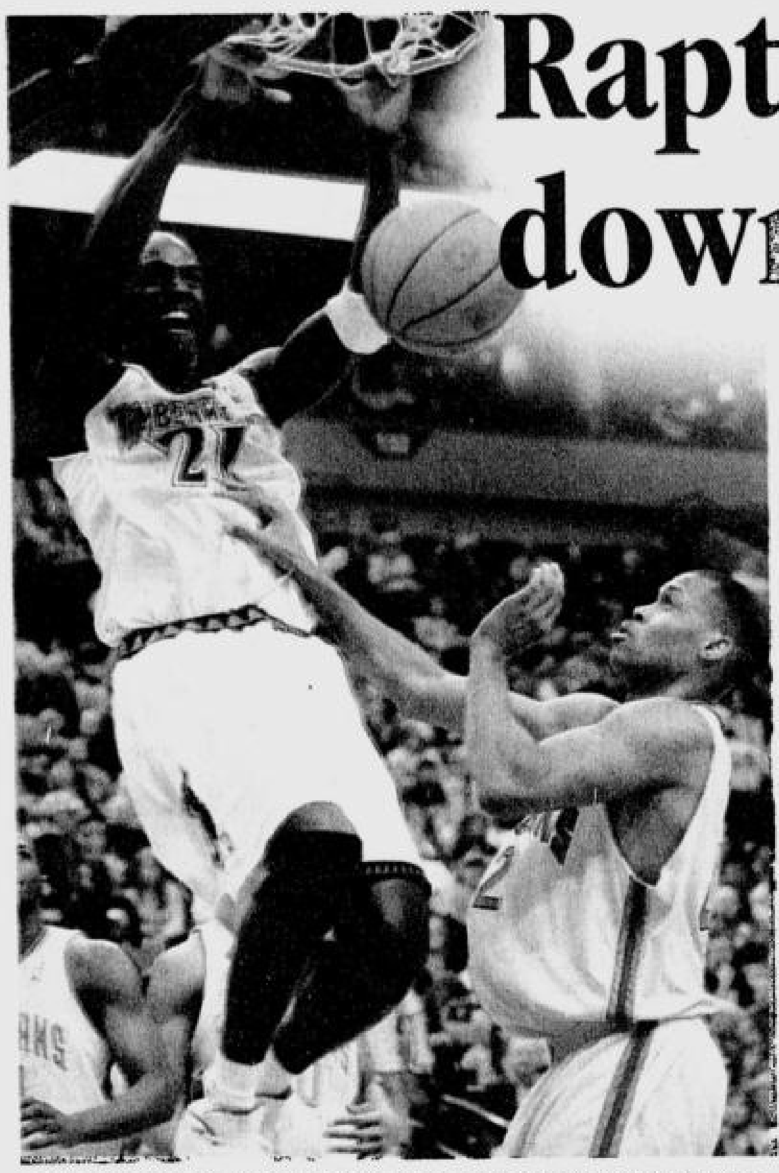
Raptors shoot down Rockets



MINNESOTA'S Kevin Garnett (21) dunks over New Orleans' P.J. Brown during their NBA game in Minneapolis, Dec. 21. Minnesota won. AP

NEW YORK—Mike James scored 19 points and Morris Peterson had 18 points and shut down Tracy McGrady as the Toronto Raptors whipped the battered Houston Rockets, 94-81, on Wednesday at the Toyota Center.

James, a former Rocket who was dealt to Toronto in October, provided the offensive spark for the Raptors but it was Peterson who made the key contribution defensively limiting McGrady to just seven points.

Chris Bosh contributed 17 points and eight rebounds to the Toronto cause as the Raptors won for just the sixth time this season, five of those coming on the road.

"Tracy is a great player but we wanted to make every shot difficult for him," said James. "He (McGrady) has a lot of pressure with all the injuries they have.

"After a while all that pressure can begin to weigh on you.

With All-Star center Yao Ming out with a sore toe and Derek Anderson, Jon Barry and Rafer Alston sidelined with various ailments, the Raptors focused their attention on McGrady, double-teaming the Rockets' other All-Star at every opportunity.

In Philadelphia, Allen Iverson tallied 38 points, eight assists, six rebounds and three steals as the 76ers beat the Golden State Warriors, 111-100, to notch their 6th win in seven games. *Reuters*

Complete results

PHILADELPHIA 111, Golden State 100; Indiana 97, LA Clippers 75; New Jersey 96, Orlando 85; San Antonio 109 NY Knicks 96; Boston 101, Utah 89

SOLAR Sports will air the Dallas-Sacramento game live from the Arco Arena starting at 11:30 a.m. today.

2 Vietnamese soccer players in SEAG match-fixing mess face lifetime bans

HANOI—TWO VIETNAMESE PLAYERS arrested for alleged match-fixing during the recent Southeast Asian Games in the Philippines could face lifelong bans if convicted, a top football official said Thursday.

The national Under 23 team's leading striker Pham Van Quyen and midfielder Le Quoc Vuong are accused of receiving cash from betting networks in order to arrange some results in what is seen as the worst crisis gripping the game in Vietnam in the past 30 years.

"The two players could be suspended for life if convicted in a court of law," said Vietnam Football Federation president Nguyen Trong Hy.

"As of now they are banned from the national V-League in 2006," the professional championship due to start in January, Hy said.

National coach Alfred Riedl of Austria expressed shock over the developments.

"I am even more shocked than the Vietnamese people by the arrest of Van Quyen and Quoc Vuong," he told the Thanh Nien daily from his home in Austria, where he is holidaying.

The SEA Games draw participants from all of Vietnam's partners in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Nine Vietnamese players have been questioned in connection with the investigation into alleged match-fixing.

Vietnam beat Myanmar 1-0 after some Vietnamese players appeared to slow down their play. Police are also investigating allegations of an attempt to fix another match with Malaysia, which Vietnam won 2-1. *AFP*

Anybody's game

CLEAN LIVING

Manolo R. Iñigo

(**CORRECTION.** In my last column, the name of Manila Rep. Jaime Lopez was missing from the paragraph which should have read this way: "At the risk of being repetitive, I am appealing again to the members of Congress, particularly Bacolod Rep. Monico Puentevella, a former PSC commissioner; and Manila Rep. Jaime Lopez, brother of former Philippine Sports Commission chair and Manila Mayor Mel Lopez, to consider filing a bill for athletes with disabilities just like RA 9064.)

IF THE TIGHT RACE IN THE ONGOING San Mig Coffee PBA Fiesta Conference is any indication, expect the teams to go for broke in this weekend's games at the Cuneta Astrodome.

A delectable doubleheader awaits the fans today when never-say-die Red Bull Barako takes on the luckless Coca-Cola Tigers, who will be playing minus suspended import Omar Thomas in the opener, while slumping Talk 'N Text battles rejuvenated San Miguel Beer in the nightcap. Crowd favorite Barangay Ginebra faces the always-dangerous Alaska in a lone game on Christmas Day to wrap up the classification round this weekend.

Sporting 8-7 records, pre-tourney seeded teams TNT, Red Bull, Ginebra and Air21 Express are locked in a hotly contested race for the remaining semifinal slot. The Purefoods Chunkee Giants earlier won the first berth.

"It's anybody's game," said a PBA diehard. "These teams will be playing with much intensity because the results carry much weight. The teams are now more competitive since commissioner Noli Eala wisely heetled the clamor to revert to the format where victories in the classification round are carried over in the quarterfinals and semifinal series."

According to Red Bull coach Yeng Guiao, his team is ready. But what inspired him even more were the Barakos' winning attitude and the total support provided by franchise owner George Chua and team manager Tony Chua.

"I'm lucky in many ways," the 45-year-old Guiao said in an interview, stressing that his import and Red Bull's new players are blending well with the nucleus that includes Rico Villanueva, Lordy Tugade, Junthy Valenzuela and Cyrus Baguio. "Najorda (Leo), Fonacier (Larry) and Bugia (Paolo) have adjusted well with the other members of their new team," added Guiao, who won back-to-back Commissioner's Cup titles for the Photokina franchise in 2001 and 2002.

* * *

REVELATION. Throughout the just-ended 23rd SEA Games competitions, Filipino athletes performed flawlessly. One flawless performance came from female billiards player Rubilen Amit, who won both the 8-ball and 9-ball gold medals in grand style.

In a post-mortem interview, the 24-year-old Amit credited her dominant form to the training program mapped out by billiards godfather Aristeo "Putch" Puyat, who, together with his elder brother, former Assemblyman Jose "Popit" Puyat, gave the sport its new-found respect and recognition.

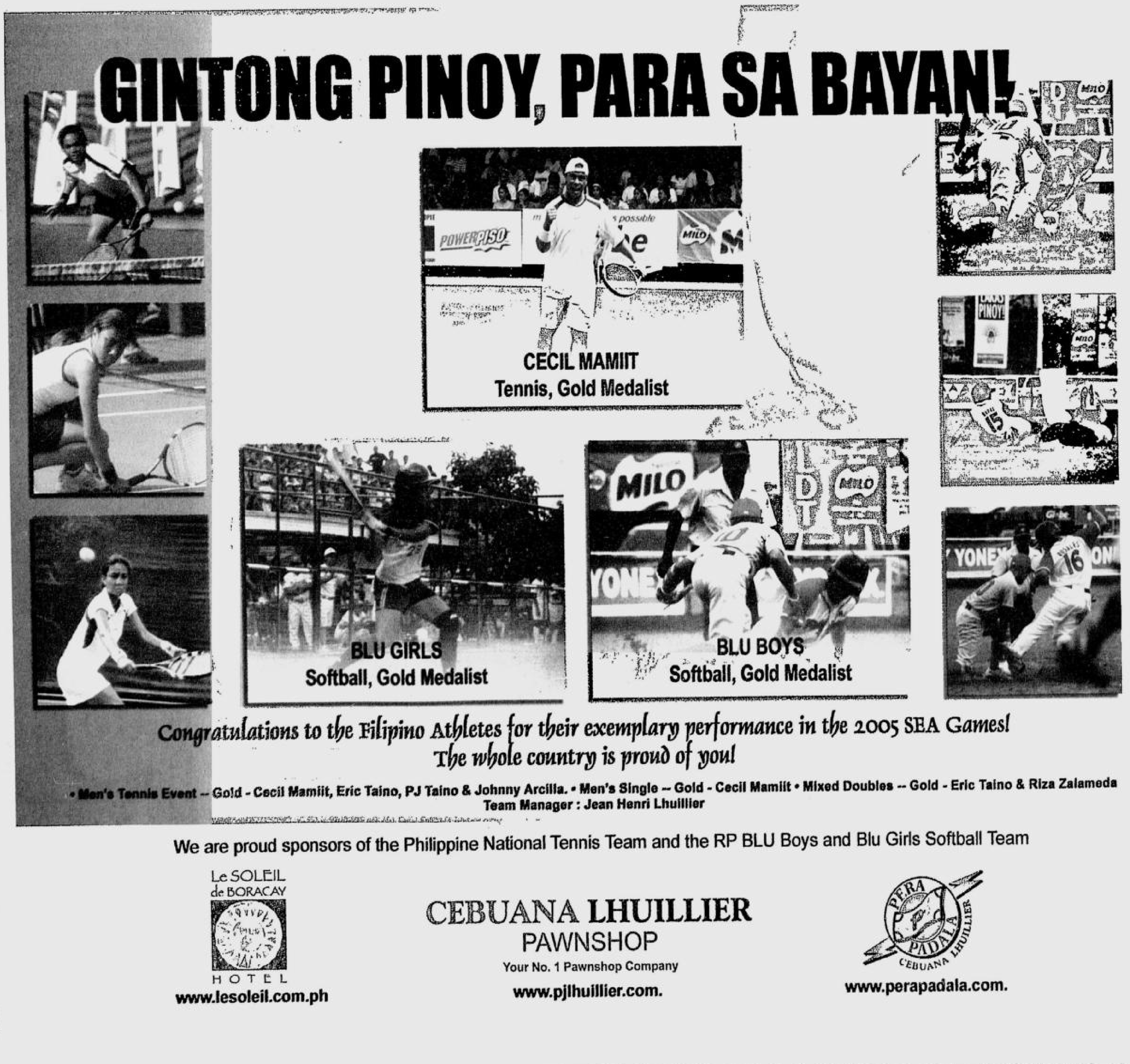
Amit, who is from Cebu, said, "Sir Putch pitted me against the country's top men pros during my training. And that boosted my confidence."

In the Philippine 9-Ball Open, Amit went unbeaten in the qualifying round to become the first and only female player to make the cut in the main draw of any national billiards tournament for men.

"We have never seen anything like it before," said a beaming Ernie Fajardo, president of the Billiards and Snooker Congress of the Philippines, adding that billiards surpassed its previous four gold-medal haul in the 2003 Vietnam SEA Games by winning a total of eight gold medals this time and becoming one of the most productive sports for RP in the 23rd SEAG, aside from wushu, athletics, the aquatics sports of diving and swimming, boxing, traditional boat race, rowing, taekwondo, fencing and wrestling.

A BS Accountancy graduate of the University of Santo Tomas, Amit is now eyeing the 2006 Women's World Pool Championship in March in Taiwan where she will be trading shots with the game's greatest players like Alison Fisher and Karen Corr.

"Amit is ready," said her coach, Boyet Asonto.



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31st METRO MANILA FILM FESTIVAL

(Inquirer Entertainment is running this MMFF guide to help moviegoers plan their holiday cinema tour. The festival opens on Dec. 25.)

Ako Legal Wife: Mano Po 4?

Stars ZsaZsa Padilla, Cherry Pie Pichache, Rufa Mae Quinto, Jay Manalo, John Prats, JC De Vera, Bianca King, Ella Guevara, Julianne Lee
Directed by Joel Lamangan

COMEDY King Dolphy laughed out loud as he watched the premiere screening of this chick flick about desperate housewife Chona (Padilla) who is out to outwit the two mistresses—Patty, the "lucky wife" (Picache) and Gloria, the "latest wife"—of her rich Chinoy husband Elton Chong (Manalo) for his money and affection.

For Dolphy to LOL was a tribute to the comic prowess of his longtime companion Padilla, who told INQUIRER Entertainment later that she had experimented with her role by emulating stand-up comics.

If Dolphy's reaction is a barometer for glee, then "Ako Legal Wife: Mano Po 4?" is the movie for an audience desperate for cheer and laughter in this season of peace and goodwill that has become bleak for most cash-strapped Pinoys.

Trust Regal Entertainment's Lily Monteverde to deliver a unique take on the life of the Chinoy, specifically the rich Chinoy Taipan, whom lesser mortals perceive to be a god of love and money.

Submitted as a script during the selection process of the Metro Manila Film Festival, "Ako Legal Wife: Mano Po 4?" reportedly emerged as the number one choice of the Film Fest selection committee.

Plot points also tackle the Chinoy issues of the firstborn son who, tradition dictates, should carry on the legacy of his father.

But what if the son turns out to be gay as in the case of Hamilton (Prats), who tries to sabotage his arranged marriage to a young Chinese girl—a very Chinese custom which, to him, is worse than never coming out of the closet?

LOL.

Nini Valera

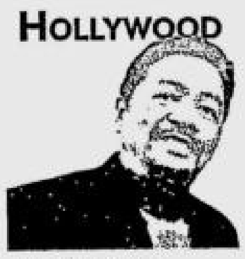
Stars' wishes for 2006

LOS ANGELES—IN THE FLURRY OF press cons crammed into our schedule before the holidays began, our group asked several stars what their hopes and wishes are for 2006.

Most of them gave profound answers, especially **Johnny Depp** who just keeps impressing us (although he does not try to) with the views that he expresses in our conversations with him. This man is a beautiful soul.

But the stars were also candid, adding personal wishes into the mix: **Uma Thurman** suddenly looked up at the ceiling of a New York hotel meeting room and hoped the massive chandelier would not do a "Phantom of the Opera" number on her; **Scarlett Johansson** wished her puppy would be housebroken soon.

ONLY IN HOLLYWOOD



Ruben V. Nepales

Uma Thurman

(She provides the oomph in the movie "The Producers" as—hold your breath—Ulla Inga Hansen Benson Yonsen Tallen-Hallen Svaden Svanson.)

I try to make New Year's resolutions but I'm ashamed to say that I have rarely kept any of them (laughing). My hopes for the New Year? I hope we pull out of Iraq. I hope that my children and everybody else's children are safe. (She looked up at a huge chandelier hanging right over her.) I hope that chandelier doesn't fall (laughter). Peace and happiness for everyone. I hate to be such a Hallmark Card but what else can you wish for?

Naomi Watts

(She somersaults and juggles stones to amuse King Kong and she does not look like an idiot—that's how good an actress she is.)

I'll tell you my plan for next year: I vowed to myself to not work for at least half of the year. I'm ready for some fun, some rest, time to be bored, time to spend in my house and maybe travel. In terms of New Year's resolutions, I don't make those because I know they never work (laughing). They work only for a few days. I just want time off.

Adrien Brody

(He has the thankless task of competing against the kinda big ape for Naomi's affections.)

I am pretty good with New Year's resolutions.

> The list includes world peace, housebroken puppies ...

That's how I got on the cover of Men's Health magazine (laughter). I didn't eat things that I said I wouldn't eat. I worked out religiously. I ran. I allowed myself to eat whatever I wanted only on the weekends. I freed myself from my addiction to smoking seven years ago.

Starting a new leaf, one day at a time, is important. It's an easy way to say, okay, that's the past—2005 is going to be behind us. I'd like to move on and learn from my mistakes. I say to myself, I will not do that or I will do less of that. I'll be realistic and be good to myself.

Wishes? I wish there would be less conflict. When I had the opportunity to say a few words at the Academy Awards (when he won Best Actor in 2003), I said I really hoped for a swift resolution [to the war in Iraq]. The resolution has not been swift. I wish for less pain in this world. I went to India recently. There's so much poverty and suffering. I wish there would be less of that.

JOHNNY Depp: Let's talk.

Johnny Depp

("You will hate me," he says at the beginning of his new movie "The Libertine"—that will be a little hard to do for Depp enthusiasts.)

I hope for all of us, dwellers of this planet, to attempt to work things out first before we start lighting cars and buildings on fire and hurting other people. Let us all talk first. We have the beautiful ability to speak but we are losing the ability to understand

STARS'/ A2-4

NAOMI Watts: Some time off.

Thumbs-up for Film Year 2005

VIEWFINDER

Nestor U. Torre

AS FILM YEAR 2005 WINDS DOWN, both movie practitioners and members of the audience want to know: Are we better off now than we were in 2004? Careful analysis of the events this year provides the answer: Yes.

The mainstream movie industry itself has had one of its worst years in terms of films produced. But the rise of digital filmmaking has helped neutralize some of the losses, and in fact has provided many of the bright spots that made the year eventful.

The current ferment in digital filmmaking was mainly initiated earlier this year by the Cinemalaya alternative film festival put up by the Film Development Council of the Philippines, the Cultural Center of the Philippines, the UP Film Center and **Tonyboy Cojuangco**.

Under their aegis, nine first-time filmmakers were each given a grant of P500,000 to make a digital feature. Quite a number of them won favor both with film fest jurors and movie buffs, and one production, "Maximo Oliveros," garnered awards abroad *and* had a good commercial run in mainstream theaters.

This has encouraged other new filmmakers to find financing for their own digital features, thus significantly upping the Filipino film industry's total production output this year.

Other plus points were scored this year by the many festivals and special screenings sponsored by different countries' embassies and various other organizations. These festivals enhanced film buffs' appreciation of quality movies from all over the world.

On the other hand, local film awards tuned out to be counterproductive, because some of their subjective verdicts "honored" the wrong films for even worse reasons.

More on the up and up was the good showing of studios like Star Cinema, which strove to produce well-conceptualized films even as most movie companies folded up their tents and opted to wait for better times.

These active studios belie the cynical and defeatist view that Filipino movies are "dead." Together with the digital trend, they show the upbeat way to a more progressive and productive future for local films.

What do we mean by this? Active mainstream studios should team up with new filmmakers to produce digital features of their own.

As more movie-houses here make themselves digital-capable, this combined effort would comprise a viable alternative circuit for the industry, a cheaper option in addition to the more expensive mainstream 35mm circuit.

We should also cite the positive contributions made by the Cinema Evaluation Board, the FDCP, and the new projects initiated at the Film Academy of the Philippines by **Leo Martinez**, including a new literature-based film festival next year.

It's currently fashionable to mourn the "death" of Filipino movies, but we refuse to take that facile, defeatist route. As the upbeat developments we've cited show, Film Year 2005 has turned out to be better than 2004—so, what cause do we have to hold a wake?

What we *should* do is to work hard and in tandem, to keep the good news coming in 2006!

Christmas albums

HOUSE of Praise has released these Yuletide albums: "Joy! A Christmas Collection" by Avalon; "Christmas Hillsong" by **Dariene Zschech** and the Hillsong Music team; "Christmas" by **Jaci Velasquez**, and "15 Christmas Favorites! Kids"

'Cheaper By The Dozen, 2'

STEVE **Martin** and **Bonnie Hunt** play the harassed parents of a big brood in "Cheaper By The Dozen, 2." Hoping to bring their large family together for a memorable summer vacation, they take their 12 children to rustic Lake Winnetka, Wisconsin, their longtime family vacation home.

But their retreat turns into an "attack" when they enter into a competition with the over-achieving members of another large family headed by Martin's longtime rival (**Eugene Levy**).

The film's young stars include the popular **Tim Welling, Hilary Duff** and **Piper Perabo**.

Debut album

SINGER-SONGWRITER **Dale Ibay** has come out with his debut album, "Carpe Diem," with 16 cuts including "Sticks and Stones," "White Lies," "Harbor," "Gone," and "Take Away." The first single off the album is "As The Sun Comes Up."

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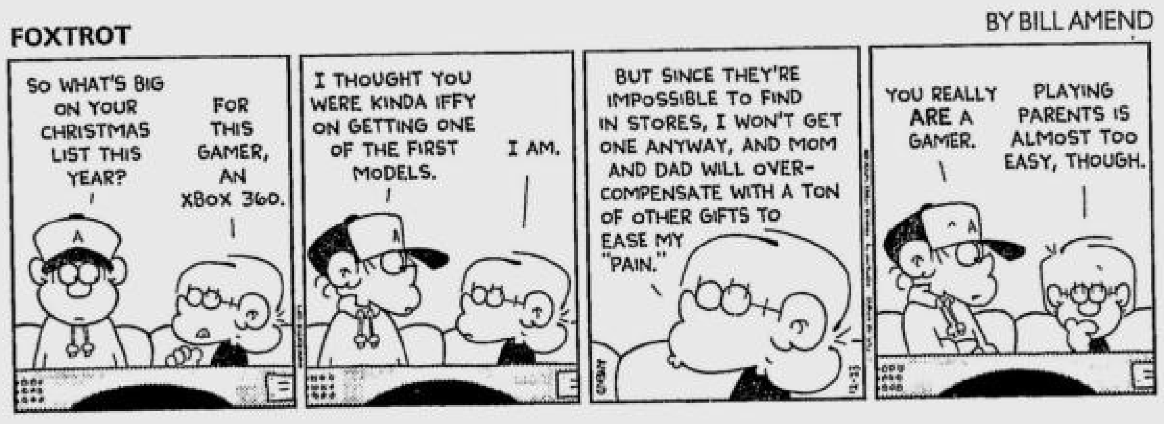
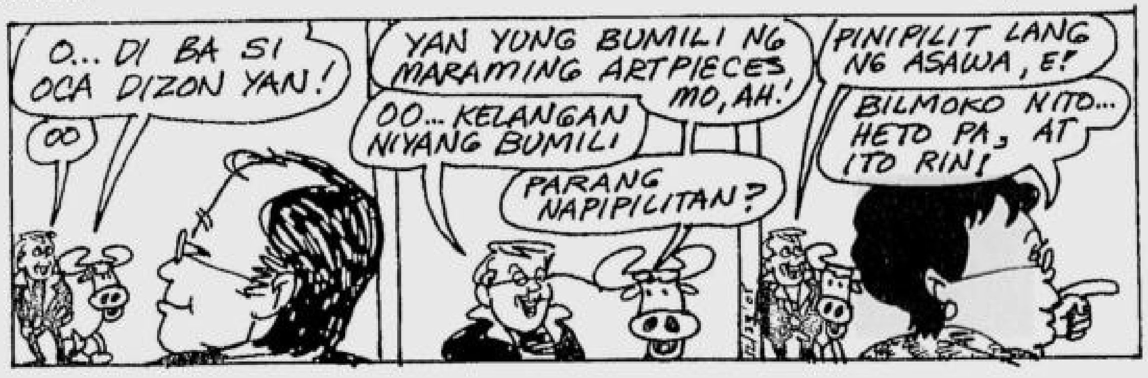
FOXTROT

BY BILL AMEND


SO WHAT'S BIG ON YOUR CHRISTMAS LIST THIS YEAR?
FOR THIS GAMER, AN XBOX 360.
I THOUGHT YOU WERE KINDA IFFY ON GETTING ONE OF THE FIRST MODELS.
I AM.
BUT SINCE THEY'RE IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND IN STORES, I WON'T GET ONE ANYWAY, AND MOM AND DAD WILL OVER-COMPENSATE WITH A TON OF OTHER GIFTS TO EASE MY "PAIN."
YOU REALLY ARE A GAMER.
PLAYING PARENTS IS ALMOST TOO EASY, THOUGH.

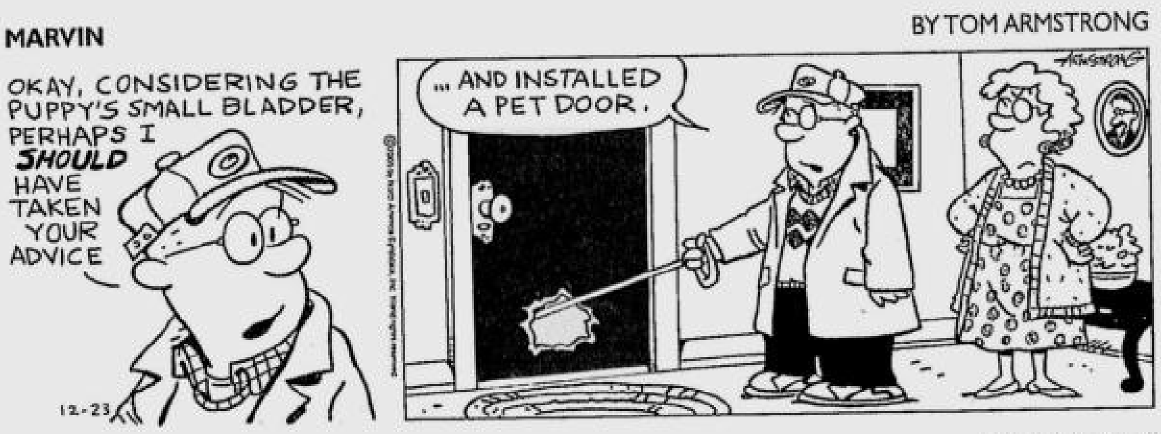
A. LIPIN

BY JESS ABRERA


O... DI BA SI OCA DIZON YAN!
OO
YAN YUNG BUMILI NG MARAMING ARTPIECES MO, AH!
OO... KELANGAN NIYANG BUMILI
PARANG NAPIPILITAN?
PINIPILIT LANG NG ASAWA, E!
BILMOKO NITO... HETO PA, AT ITO RIN!

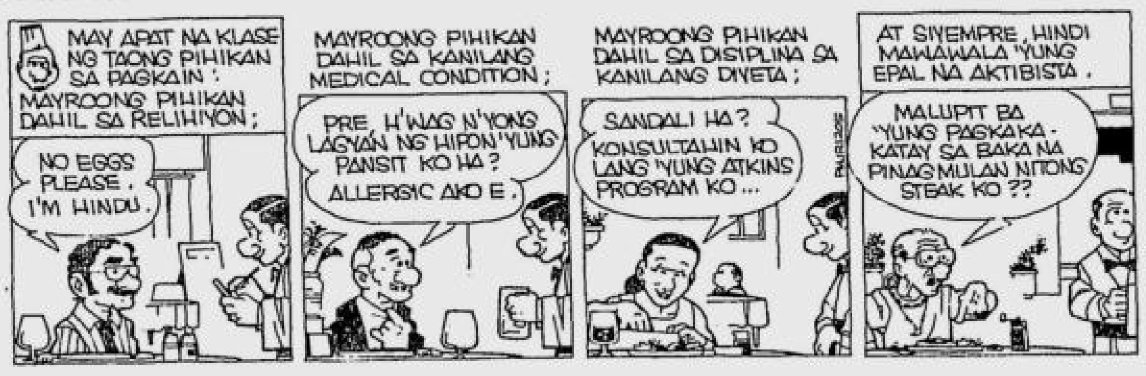
MARVIN

BY TOM ARMSTRONG


OKAY, CONSIDERING THE PUPPY'S SMALL BLADDER, PERHAPS I SHOULD HAVE TAKEN YOUR ADVICE
... AND INSTALLED A PET DOOR.
12-23
ARMSTRONG

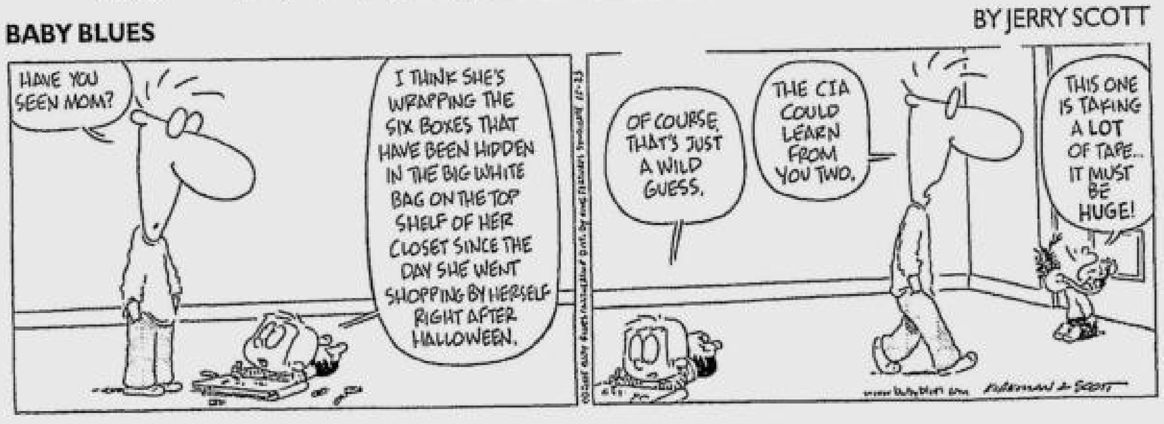
PUGAD BABOY

BY P.M. JUNIOR


MAY APAT NA KLASE NG TAONG PIHIKAN SA PAGKAIN :
MAYROONG PIHIKAN DAHIL SA RELIHIYON ;
NO EGGS PLEASE. I'M HINDU.
MAYROONG PIHIKAN DAHIL SA KANILANG MEDICAL CONDITION ;
PRE, H'WAG N'YONG LAGYAN NG HIPON 'YUNG PANSIT KO HA?
ALLERGIC AKO E.
MAYROONG PIHIKAN DAHIL SA DISIPLINA SA KANILANG DIYETA ;
SANDALI HA?
KONSULTAHIN KO LANG 'YUNG ATKINS PROGRAM KO...
AT SIYEMPRE, HINDI MAWAWALA 'YUNG EPAL NA AKTIBISTA.
MALUPIT BA 'YUNG PAGKAKA-KATAY SA BAKA NA PINAGMULAN NITONG STEAK KO ??

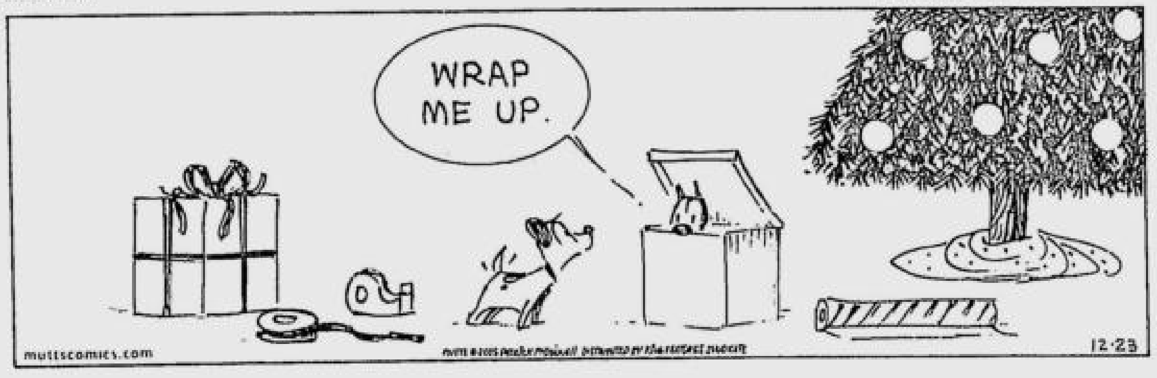
BABY BLUES

BY JERRY SCOTT


HAVE YOU SEEN MOM?
I THINK SHE'S WRAPPING THE SIX BOXES THAT HAVE BEEN HIDDEN IN THE BIG WHITE BAG ON THE TOP SHELF OF HER CLOSET SINCE THE DAY SHE WENT SHOPPING BY HERSELF RIGHT AFTER HALLOWEEN.
OF COURSE, THAT'S JUST A WILD GUESS.
THE CIA COULD LEARN FROM YOU TWO.
THIS ONE IS TAKING A LOT OF TAPE... IT MUST BE HUGE!
KIRKMAN & SCOTT

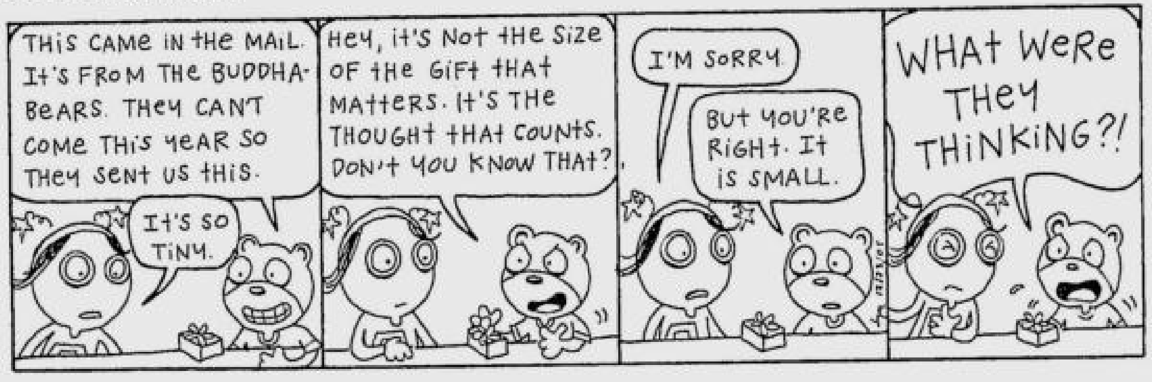
MUTTS

BY PATRICK McDONNELL


WRAP ME UP.
muttscomics.com
12-23

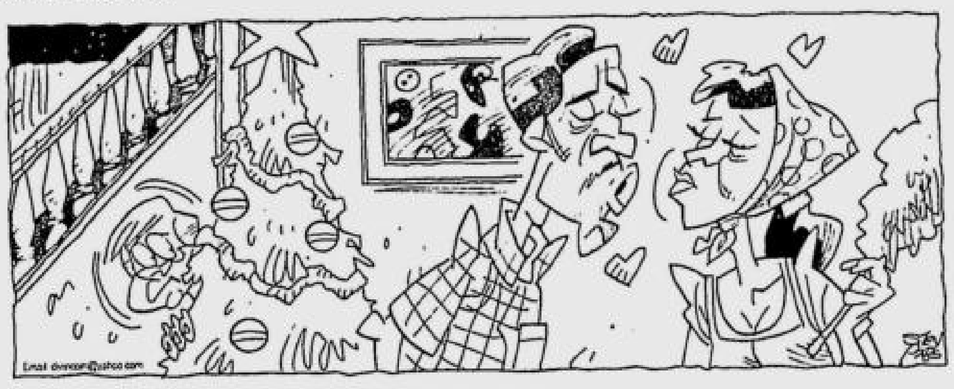
ATOMO AND WEBOY

BY LYRA GARCELLANO


THIS CAME IN THE MAIL. IT'S FROM THE BUDDHA-BEARS. THEY CAN'T COME THIS YEAR SO THEY SENT US THIS.
IT'S SO TINY.
HEY, IT'S NOT THE SIZE OF THE GIFT THAT MATTERS. IT'S THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS. DON'T YOU KNOW THAT?
I'M SORRY.
BUT YOU'RE RIGHT. IT IS SMALL.
WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?!

DIVINE COMEDY

BY STEVEN PABALINAS


I SAW DADDY KISSING THE HOUSE-MAID

HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

YOU BORN TODAY: You're easy-going. You enjoy the company of others. Because you love fresh ideas and new vistas, you want to educate and edify. You feel it's your duty to help others, and you're often quick to see ways to do this. People definitely benefit from knowing you. Increased solitude in the next year will help you learn something important and valuable to you.
Birthdate of: Joseph Smith, Mormon founder; Robert Bly poet/teacher; Susan Lucci, TV soap actress.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19): The Moon is opposite your sign today. This happens once a month for about two days. When it occurs, you are more involved with partners and close friends.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20): This is a good day to talk with co-workers and iron out any little difficulties that exist. People are willing to listen. Furthermore, you are patient with others.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20): New love might enter your world today. Flirtations are sweet. This is a good day for the arts, playful activities with children and anything to do with professional sports.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22): Stay at home today if you can. You'll enjoy puttering around where you live. It's also a good day to entertain at home, especially family mem-bers.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22): This is a busy, chatty day. You have errands to do. Short trips, conversations with relatives, shopping, and buying and selling all combine to keep you on the run!

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22): Today and tomorrow, you're concerned about money matters, including shopping. In fact, these are rather good days for you to shop. They are also good for business and commerce.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22): Today and tomorrow, the Moon is in your sign. This gives you a slight edge over all the other signs. It brings you a bit of good luck. (Milk this for all it's worth!)

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21): You're a powerful sign, and this is a busy time of year for you. Try to get a little rest today and tomorrow. Work behind the scenes, if possible.

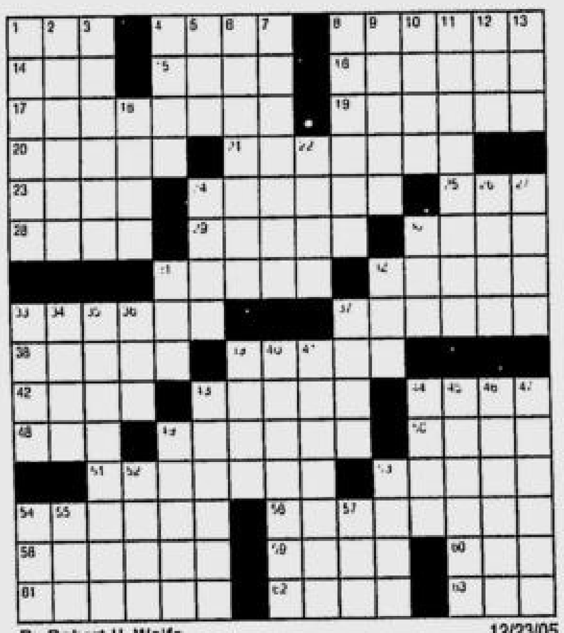
SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21): Today and tomorrow are pleasant days to schmooze. Enjoy friendly conversations and the company of clubs, groups, conferences and organizations.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19): For whatever reason, today and tomorrow you're briefly in the limelight. People will notice you. Knowing this, dress accordingly and think before you speak.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18): Try to do something different from your daily routine today. Go someplace you've never been to before. Try to learn something new and exciting.

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20): This is a good day to catch up on paying bills, attend to insurance matters and organize a lot of red-tape details. It's a bit boring, but it's got to be done.

DAILY CROSSWORD



By Robert H. Wolfe
North Woodmere, NY

12/23/05

ACROSS
1 Get-up-and-go
4 Gateway
8 Whoopi's "Ghost" role
14 Ms. Thurman
15 City on the Truckee
16 Harmless
17 Lap at spirited minerals?
19 Became taut
20 REM situation
21 Teachers' statuses
23 Ethereal
24 Pentose sugar
25 Thanksgiving casualty
28 Ex-Supreme
29 Divert
30 Partial: pref.
31 Nappy leather
32 Divvy up
33 Prayer book
37 Grossed
38 Roeper's partner
39 Eva or Juan
42 Connections
43 Director Woody
44 ER locale
48 Extend an invitation to
49 Shirt part
50 Aware of
51 Bulb measure
53 Wool wearers
54 Rapper of note
56 Asks and answers where to find church singers?
58 Tomorrow, Pedro
59 Captain Kirk's helmsman
60 Floral ring
61 Comic Tom
62 Printed matter
63 Actor Chaney

DOWN
1 Neutron star
2 Actor Estevez
3 Indiana team
4 Leave out
5 "__ the ramparts..."
6 Former
7 "Citizen Kane" sled
8 Thickheaded
9 Steel plow pioneer
10 __ of Cleves
11 Long for hardwood aura?
12 Time of life
13 Finish
18 Telegraph switches
22 Facial feature
24 Actor Julia
26 Katz of "Hocus Pocus"
27 Comportment
30 HBO rival
31 Made a lap
32 Male child
33 Physical starter?
34 Bird of the Nile
35 Search for sparkling victories?
36 AARP targets
37 Voice quality
39 Guilty, maybe
40 Lamentation poet
41 Income
43 "Nashville" director
44 Holiday chuckle
45 Playwright Eugene
46 Sound system
47 Arrives unexpectedly
49 Secretarial talent
52 Med. course
53 Close
54 HRE part
55 Chairman _
57 160, once

Thursday's Puzzle Solved

U	L	A	N		T	A	B	S		S	C	A	B	S
P	O	R	E		E	L	I	E		C	A	V	I	L
S	A	I	D		N	O	R	M		A	N	I	T	A
E	T	S		S	A	U	D	I		M	O	S	E	Y
T	H	E	L	A	N	D	S	C	A	P	E			
			A	L	T			O	B	I		A	B	S
I	M	A	G	O		U	G	L	E		T	I	R	O
B	E	L	O	N	G	S	T	O	T	H	E	M	A	N
I	L	L	S		I	C	O	N		E	S	S	E	S
S	T	Y		T	R	I			S	I	T			
			W	H	O	L	O	O	K	S	A	T	I	T
A	L	G	A	E		L	I	M	I	T		U	S	E
S	O	A	K	S		A	L	A	P		E	L	S	A
T	O	M	E	I		T	E	N	T		B	L	U	R
A	M	E	N	S		E	R	I	S		B	E	E	S

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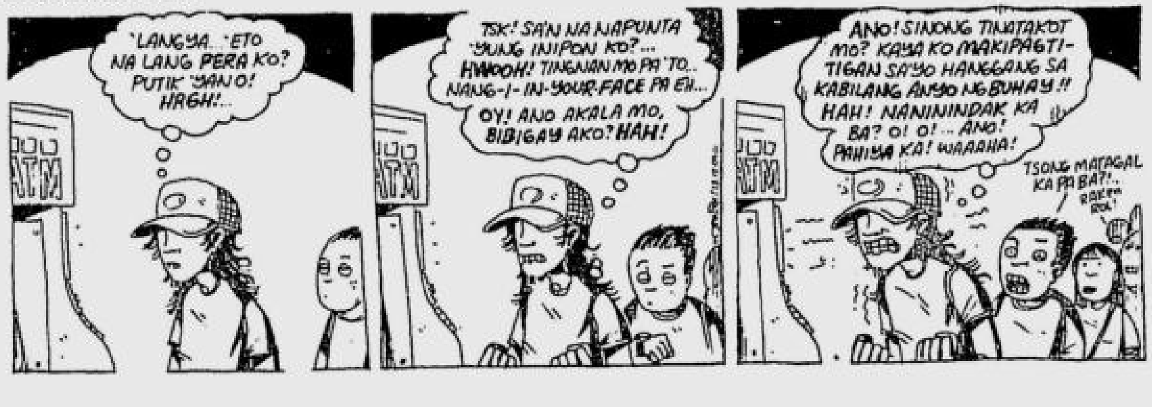
12/23/05

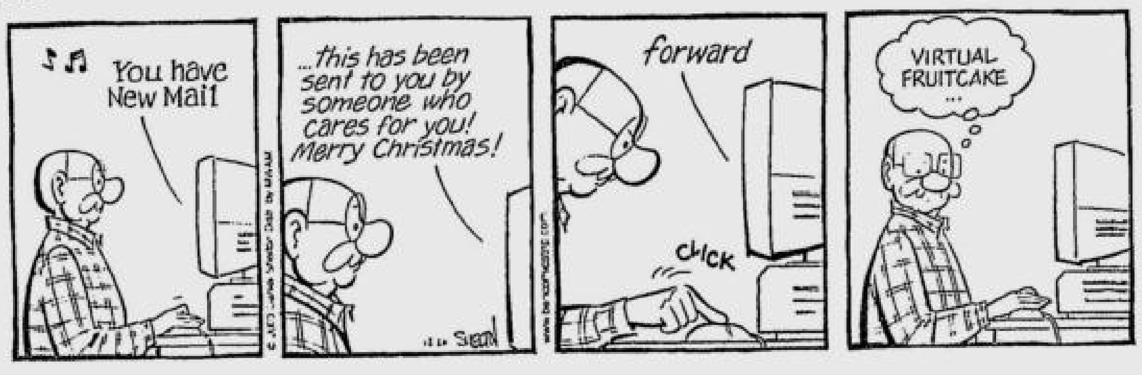
MIKROKOSMOS

BY JOMIKE TEJIDO


'LANGYA... 'ETO NA LANG PERA KO? PUTIK 'YAN O! HRGH!...
ATM
TSK! SA'N NA NAPUNTA 'YUNG INIPON KO?... HWOOH! TINGNAN MO PA 'TO... NANG-I-IN-YOUR-FACE PA EH...
OY! ANO AKALA MO, BIBIGAY AKO? HAH!
ANO! SINONG TINATAKOT MO? KAYA KO MAKIPAGTI-TIGAN SA'YO HANGGANG SA KABILANG ANYO NG BUHAY!! HAH! NANININDAK KA BA? O! O!... ANO! PAHIYA KA! WAAAHA!
TSONG MATAGAL KA PA BA?!..

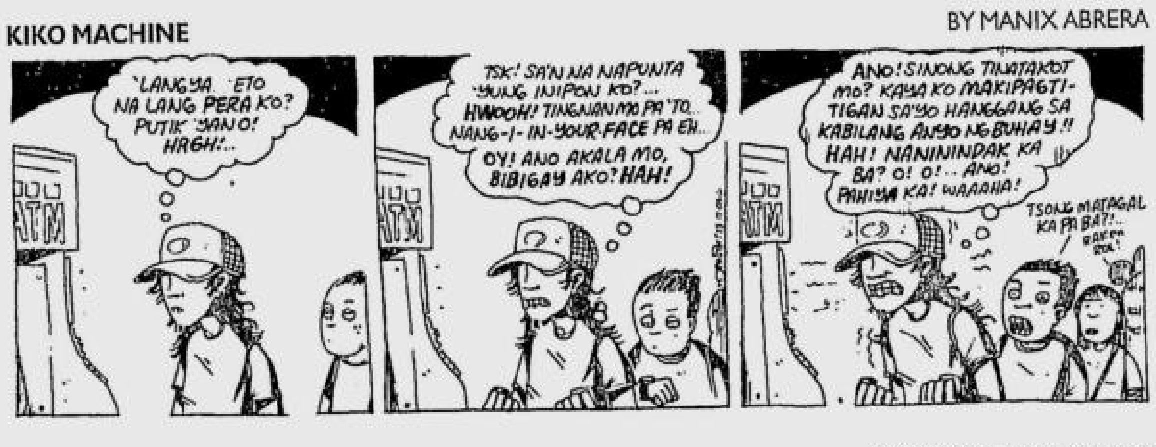
BEN

BY DANIEL SHELTON


You have New Mail
...this has been sent to you by someone who cares for you! Merry Christmas!
forward
CLICK
VIRTUAL FRUITCAKE ...

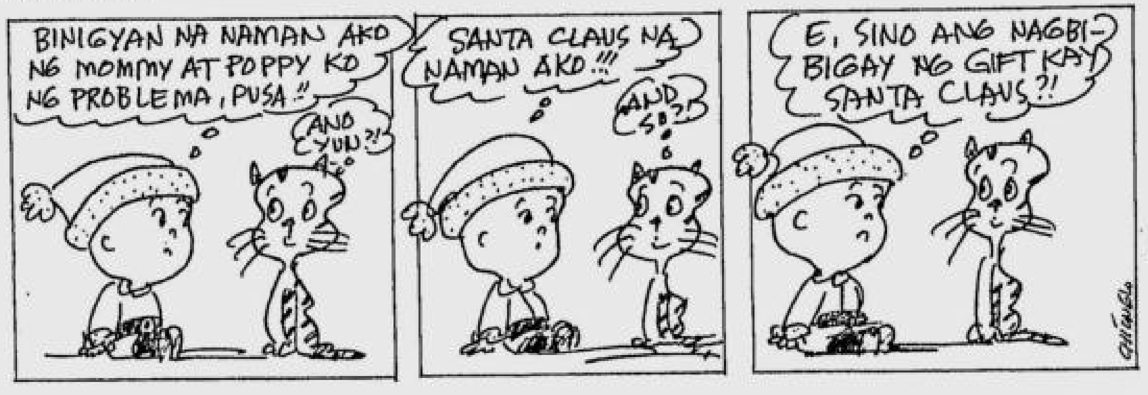
KIKO MACHINE

BY MANIX ABRERA


'LANGYA... 'ETO NA LANG PERA KO? PUTIK 'YAN O! HRGH!...
ATM
TSK! SA'N NA NAPUNTA 'YUNG INIPON KO?... HWOOH! TINGNAN MO PA 'TO... NANG-I-IN-YOUR-FACE PA EH...
OY! ANO AKALA MO, BIBIGAY AKO? HAH!
ANO! SINONG TINATAKOT MO? KAYA KO MAKIPAGTI-TIGAN SA'YO HANGGANG SA KABILANG ANYO NG BUHAY!! HAH! NANININDAK KA BA? O! O!... ANO! PAHIYA KA! WAAAHA!
TSONG MATAGAL KA PA BA?!..

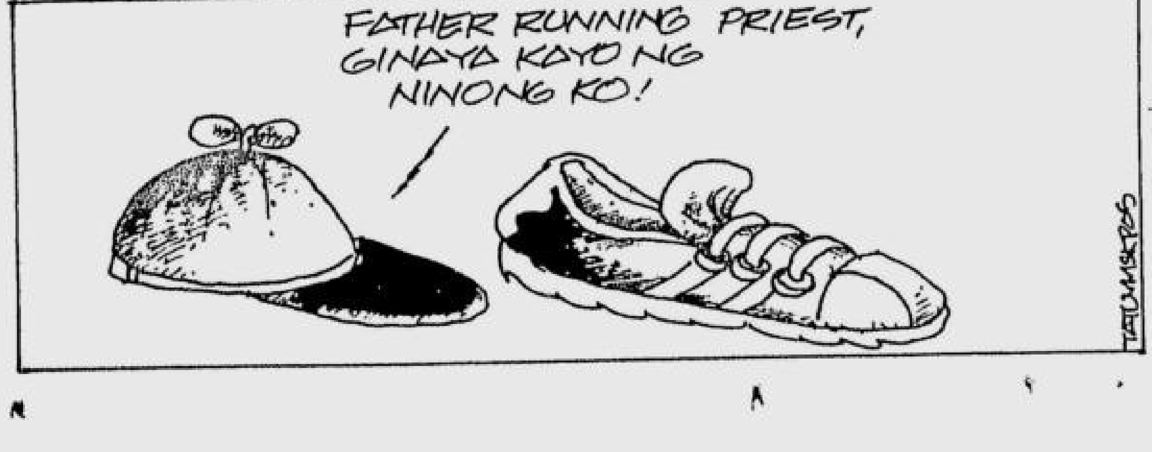
LOVEKNOTS

BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO


BINIGYAN NA NAMAN AKO NG MOMMY AT POPPY KO NG PROBLEMA, PUSA!!
ANO YUN?!
SANTA CLAUS NA NAMAN AKO!!!
AND SO?
E, SINO ANG NAGBIBIGAY NG GIFT KAY SANTA CLAUS?!
CHIONGLO

TULDOK

BY PAPU AND TATUM MILAMBILING


FATHER RUNNING PRIEST, GINAYA KAYO NG NINONG KO!
TATUM

Tikoy defends Cinemanila

TIKOY Aguiluz: We should see the big picture. JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

By Bayani San Diego Jr.
Photo by Jim Guiao Punzalan

FILMMAKER TIKOY AGUILUZ VISITED INQUIRER Entertainment recently to air his side on various issues confronting Cinemanila—the film festival he founded seven years ago—which appeared in these pages recently.

TAKE FIVE

The only international film festival in the country at the moment (the last edition was held in October), Cinemanila opened a local digital film competition this year.

Aguiluz discussed the Laurice Guillen-Vic del Rosario tiff and the involvement of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA).

Ms Guillen said there was a breach in protocol at the Cinemanila launch in October.

I have no quarrel with Laurice. As far as I remember, Laurice was escorted that night by Manila Mayor [Lito] Atienza. City hall was in charge of the diplomatic community and VIPs. I took care of the filmmakers—I made sure they were seated properly and fed.

Was National Artist for Film Eddie Romero acknowledged that night?

He was acknowledged by Mayor Atienza. Cinemanila gave a tribute to Eddie Romero a few years back.

Ms Guillen said Eddie Romero was not escorted.

Why is she complaining for Mr. Romero? The way I remember it... she was the one who... felt humiliated. [I think it] came from the announcement that she was no longer the head [of the Film Development Council of the Philippines]. Who, in his right mind, would [humiliate her] on purpose? Not Mayor Atienza.

It's been pointed out that Vic del Rosario, whose Viva Films produced the Best Digital Film winner "Tuli," asked Malacañang for the cash prizes.

It was brought up in one of the festival executive committee meetings (whose members include Del Rosario) that there might be a conflict of interest.

But we could not stop Viva from participating. If you want the industry to grow, why should you alienate the major studios? I think [Del Rosario] solicited the cash prize before "Tuli" won.

But why are we focusing on Viva's perceived interest in the P1.5 million cash prize? We should focus on the bigger picture, which is the film industry...

Wherever the money is coming from, what is more important is that a filmmaker like Mes de Guzman (one of the winners), who made a film with no stars, will get a cash prize of P1 million. That's a first in history.

Didn't you see all these problems coming?

Well, the issue [was bound to] come out. But as far as I am concerned, I can always defend the festival.

Couldn't you have put your foot down on asking money from Malacañang?

Mayor Atienza was prepared to raise the money himself. I never told anyone to ask money from [Malacañang through] the NCCA. My suggestion was to get money from the Metro Manila Film Festival funds, since [the administrator, Metro Manila Development Authority] gives money to the Film Academy of the Philippines, Mowelfund and Optical Media Board, I suggested they should also give to Cinemanila. That's what happened.

WELCOME HOME DADDY!!!
Merry X-mas po!!!
(mabait na po ako!)

Di ba't kay sarap nilang handugan
ng magandang kinabukasan?
Dahil ang paghahanda sa kinabukasan ay
aguinaldong panghabang-buhay at makahulugang tunay.

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'Not Jazz Christmas Show'

DOUGLAS NIERRAS' POWERDANCE BRINGS to Philippine audiences the country's first black theater dance concert.

"Not Just Jazz Christmas Show" is a certified new dance experience. Objects appear onstage in black light, and the dancers glow and morph into different forms.

The magical journey happens at Onstage Theater in Greenbelt on Dec. 28 and 29, 8 p.m.

For inquiries and reservations, call 995-8287 or 995-8283.

Warning

METRO Phi Restobar in Metrowalk, Ortigas warns the public against a certain Sheryl Sampang, who is selling tickets to a concert titled "Best of the Best," supposedly to be staged last Dec. 9 and 22 and again on the 28th, at 9 p.m.

The management says Metro Phi Restobar is not in any way involved in the show, whether as venue or producer.

Euro invasion

THE EURO Star Carnival opens tomorrow at The Fort in Taguig. Euro Star is world-famous for its colossal rides, among them:

"The Booster," which twists you in different directions; "G Force," which sends you soaring so high, you could virtually kiss the sky; "Flipper," which tests your high velocity fortitude; "The Ranger," which brings you face to face with your fear of heights; and "Frisbee," which swings like a massive pendulum.

Call 7272-4048 or 727-4085.

Tonight

"Hun Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey," an acrobatic and magical show, at the Aliw Theater, Star City, CCP Complex, Roxas

BEDAZZLED I
thru Saturdays

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MOVIES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE
1 KINGKONG PG-13
2 KINGKONG PG-13
3 FAMILY STONE
4 KINGKONG PG-13

Stars' wisl

and compromise. That's dishea
The only thing to do is keep mov
ward and hope that we can all g
gether. Well, not to sound like a h
a moonie but that's how I feel.

Scarlett Johansson

(Woody Allen's new muse, she i
him to cre
best review
in years,
Point." He
her in
film also
London.)

JOHANSSON: Housebroken pup

I hope
withdraw
troops fro
next yea
probably
ing to hap
it would b
New Year
sent to all
ilies that
pecting th
dren home.

For myself? I try not to think
ahead especially in this career o
would be often disappointed a
prised. If you asked me at the be
of summer, right before I shot
Point," what I was planning to do,
have said I was going to take the s
off. But I had this incredible exper
working with Woody.

I am hoping that my puppy would be housebroken (laughter). A New Year's resolution? I'll have to take votes from my family and see what aspects of my personality I need to work on (laughter).

Heath Ledger

(He finally delivers on his promise as an actor with his gut-wrenching performance in "Brokeback Mountain.")

I hope to spend as much time as possible in Australia next year. I'm trying to balance my time. I want to take Matilda (his baby with actress **Michelle Williams**) to Australia and introduce her to the ocean. Workwise, there's nothing scheduled yet. But I will have to work sometime next year to pay off my house (laughing).

LEDGER: Australian breal

Sienna Miller

(A favorite paparazzi targe
because her boyfriend happen
to be **Jude Law**, she dreams o
having more privacy.)

I would like less paparazzi in
trusion. I'm trying to be ve
diplomatic about this (laughter
I am going to try and give up
smoking. I'd like to go on work
ing, to learn, to have time off to
maybe go to India. I've alway
wanted to spend time in th
south of India. Why the south
I've been to the north so I'd like to
go to the south because I hear
that it's wonderful there.

I'd like the world to become
happier place. We've had s
many natural disasters this ye
I hope for peace in the Midd
East. I know these are big wish
but we should continue hopin
that people will stop fighting.

MTRCB PG-13
NOW ON ITS 4TH WEEK!
CANNES FILM FESTIVAL
FRENCH NOMINEE FOR THE 2006 OSCAR
'A TRUE STORY THAT HISTORY HAS FORGOTTEN'
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DIANE KRUGER (TROY, NATIONAL TREASURE, & WICKER PARK)
NORD-OUEST presents
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BENNO FÜRMANN•GUILLAUME CANET (LOVE ME IF YOU DARE & THE BEACH)
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MOVIE GUIDE
NOW SHOWING

SHANG CINEPLEX
Shangri-la Plaza EDSA corner Shaw Boulevard, Mandaluyong City, Telephone: 633.2227 / 6337851 loc. 17
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG PG13
2 (DOLBY) KING KONG PG13
3 (DOLBY) FAMILY STONE PG13
4 (DOLBY) KING KONG PG13
PREMIERE
(DOLBY) KING KONG PG13

Filinvest
FESTIVAL CINEMA
(Muntinlupa) tel 850.3571 or 72
1 (DTS) KING KONG
2 (SDDS) KING KONG
3 (DTS) KING KONG
4 GOLD (DTS) CHICKEN LITTLE
5 GOLD (DOLBY) KING KONG
6 GOLD (SDDS) KING KONG
7 GOLD (DOLBY) THE FOG
8 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
9 HARRY POTTER-4
10 FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)

EASTWOOD CINEMAS
(Eastwood City Walk 2, Eastwood City
E. Rodriguez Jr. Ave (C-5) Quezon City)
tel 687.6963 or 72
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 (DOLBY) KING KONG
3 (DOLBY) FAMILY STONE
4 (DOLBY) KING KONG

CINEMA 2000
Movie Theatres of the New Millenium

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7383
1 KING KONG
2 (DTS) KING KONG
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

Cinema 2000 Pavilion Mall
(Binan) tel. (049) 4111146
1 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 (DOLBY) KING KONG
3 (DTS) KING KONG
4 KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Cinemagix
(Urdaneta) tel(075) 568.6771
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Metrotown
(Tarlac) tel (045) 982.1729
1 GHOST INSIDE
2 IN HER SHOES
3 (DOLBY) THE MYTH
4 (DTS) THE FOG

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Plaridel) tel (044) 795.3320
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG

Cinema 2000 Waltermart
(Gapan)
1 GRAND OPENING DEC. 16. KING KONG
2 CINEMA 2 OPENS ON DEC. 25. 2005 "EXODUS" & ENTENG KABISOTE

CINEMA 2000
Cinema 2000 Waltermart Makati
Waltermart Center, Chino Roces Ave. cor. Antonio Arnaiz Pio del Pilar, Makati City
Tel 816.4214 / 816.4216
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG

Blue Wave
MARQUINTON
Sumulong Highway cor. Mayor Gil Fernando Street, Sto. Niño, Marikina City tel. 9341927
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 (DOLBY) CHICKEN LITTLE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)

SUPER CINERAMA
Isetann Cinerama Complex Recto
tel 7334228
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 RESERVED
4 FAMILY STONE (SNEAK PREVIEW)
5 LOLLIPOP & ROSES

MARKET! MARKET!
Mandaluyong
tel 533.3851 / 533.3856
1 KING KONG
2 RESERVED
3 THE MYTH
4 RESERVED

Masagana
CINEMA
(Pasay) tel 833.3290 / 833.3274
1 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
2 CHICKEN LITTLE
3 THE MYTH

Center Mall Cinema
Baguio Center Mall, Magsaysay Avenue
(Baguio City) tel (074)- (4449346)
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG

Jade Cinema
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.5001 to 03
1 (DOLBY EX) KING KONG
2 MY LITTLE BRIDE
3 (DTS EX) KING KONG
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

Cine Nepo
(Angeles City) tel (045) 887.0121
1 ABNORMAL BEAUTY
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 (DTS) KING KONG

Cine Nepo
(Dagupan City) tel (075) 515.8409
1 HARI NG SABLAY
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 (DOLBY) KING KONG
4 (DTS) KING KONG

Centre Plaza Cinema
(Balanga, Bataan) tel (047) 237.7007
1 THE MYTH
2 MY LITTLE BRIDE

starmall Movies
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(Mandaluyong) tel. 7266150
3 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
4 DOLBY DIGITAL EX) KING KONG
5 KING KONG

METROPOLIS star
www.clickthecity.com.ph
(ALABANG) tel. 8504285, 5433994
1 MASAHISTA
2 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
3 WEREWOLF GONGERSNAPS-2
4 KING KONG

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NE Pacific Mall Cabanatuan
Telephone No. (044) 600-3025
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG

Cinemagic Pacific Mall
(Lucena City) tel. 6605271
1 THE MYTH
2 KING KONG
3
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Lianas Cinema
(Pasig) tel 640.4748
1 IN HER SHOES
2 THE MYTH

Lianas Cinema
(Alabang) tel 850.1276
1 (SDDS) WEREWOLF GINGER SNAP-2
2 KUNG LILIGAYA KA SA PILING NG IBA
3 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
4 (DTS) UNDERWORLD

Lianas MovieCity
(Calamba) tel (049) 545.7202
1 (DOLBY) KING KONG
2 HULA MO HULI KO
3 (DTS) JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 LOLLIPOP & ROSES
5 HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Fiesta World Mall
(Lipa) tel (043) 981.0790
1 MY LITTLE BRIDE
2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

Berma Cinema
(Baclaran) tel 879.2030 / 879.2029
1 THE MYTH
2 LIGAYA KATUMBAS AY BUHAY

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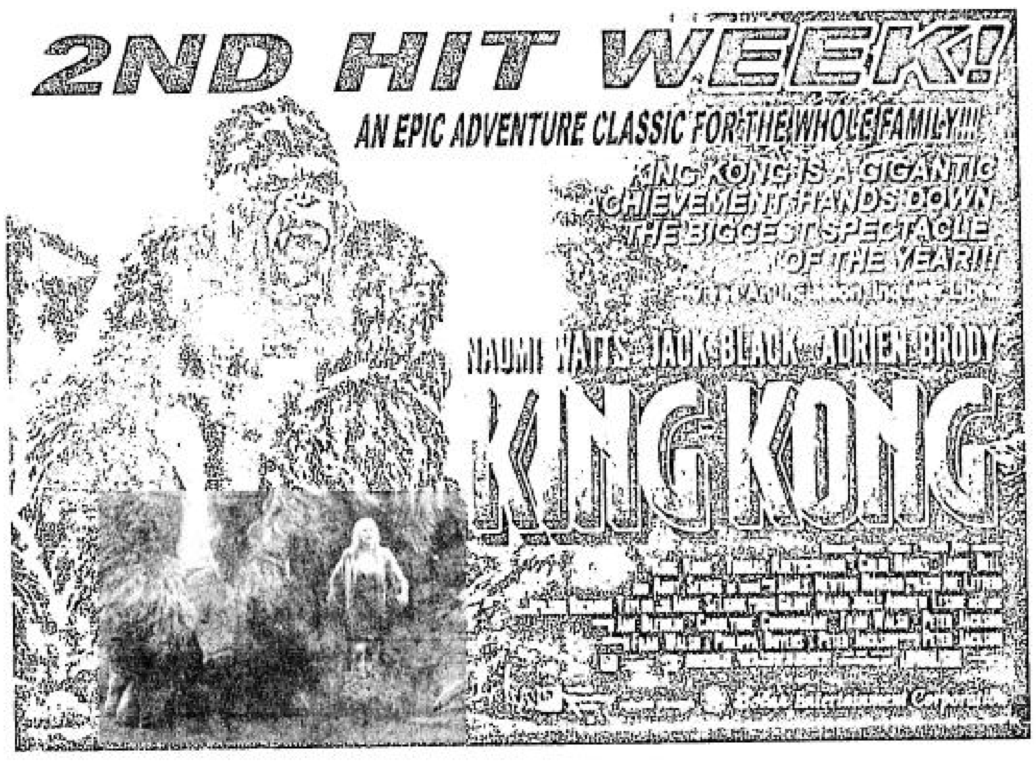

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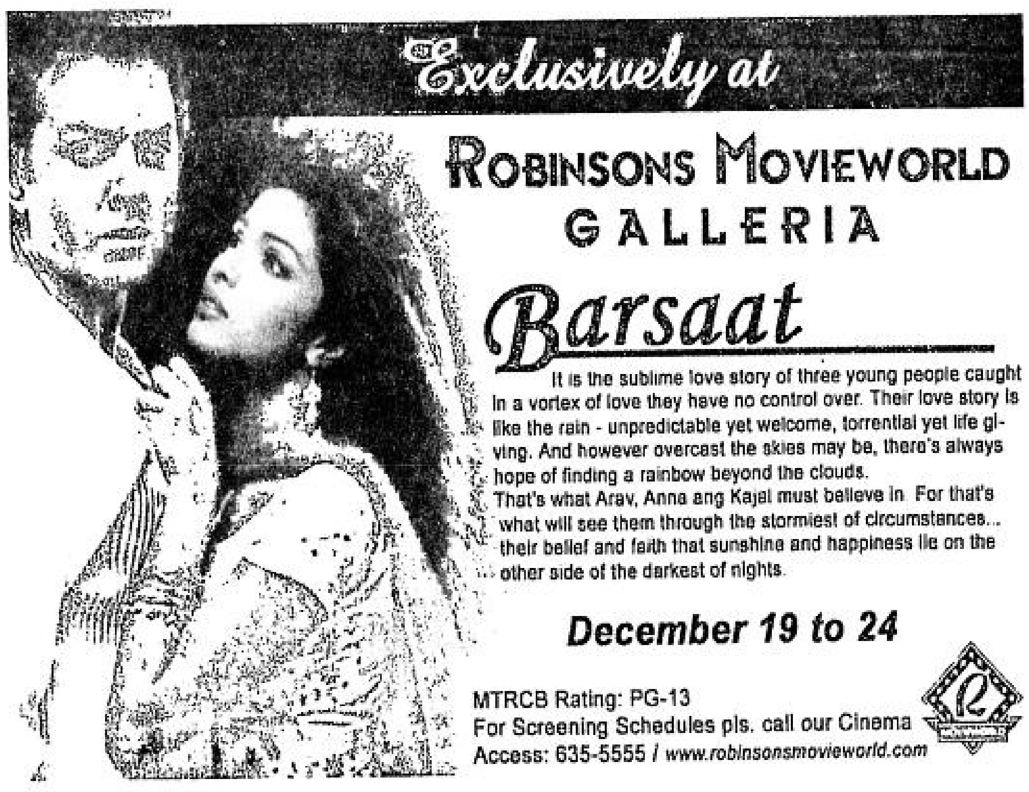
KING KONG



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It is the sublime love story of three young people caught in a vortex of love they have no control over. Their love story is like the rain - unpredictable yet welcome, torrential yet life giving. And however overcast the skies may be, there's always hope of finding a rainbow beyond the clouds.
That's what Arav, Anna ang Kajal must believe in. For that's what will see them through the stormiest of circumstances... their belief and faith that sunshine and happiness lie on the other side of the darkest of nights.
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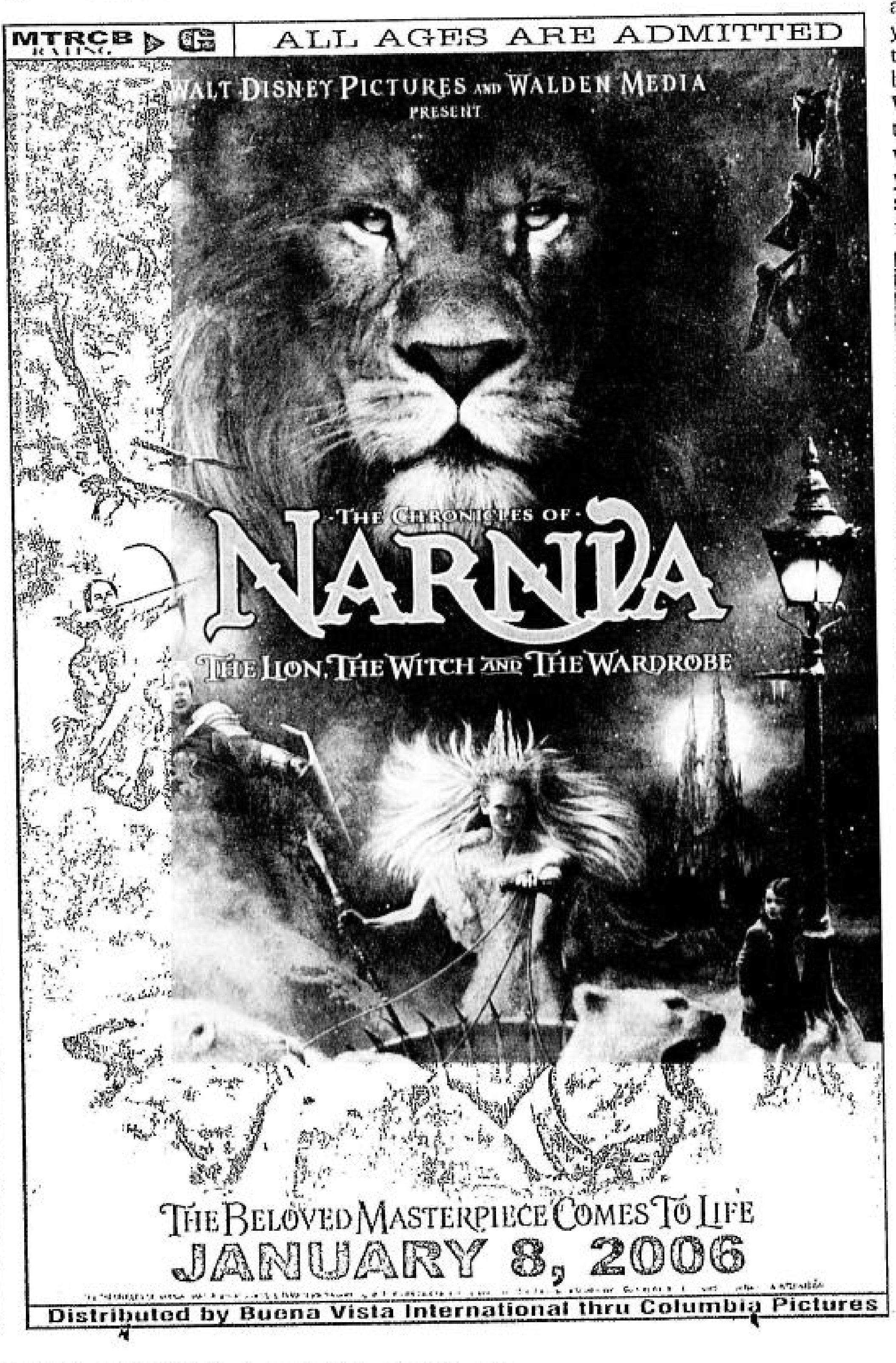

MTRCB RATING G
ALL AGES ARE ADMITTED
WALT DISNEY PICTURES AND WALDEN MEDIA PRESENT
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
THE LION, THE WITCH AND THE WARDROBE
THE BELOVED MASTERPIECE COMES TO LIFE
JANUARY 8, 2006
Distributed by Buena Vista International thru Columbia Pictures

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l at Club Mwah! Thursdays
10:30 p.m.

Blvd., Pasay City. Call 911-5555 or 891-9999.

San Miguel Music Festival featuring the **San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra** and the **San Miguel Master Chorale** at the Grand Atrium of the **Shangri-La Plaza Mall**; 7 p.m.

Bedazzled III Christmas Special at **Club Mwah!**; 10:30 p.m.

Shayne with **Brown Sugar Factory** and **First Circle** at **Suburbia**

NTwine and **Michael Angeloat Virgin Café**

Route 70 at **Merk's**, Greenbelt 3.

Joyride at **Elbow Room**, Metrowalk, Pasig

Tomorrow

"**Hun Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey**," an acrobatic and magical show, at the **Aliw Theater**, Star City, CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Call 911-5555 or 891-9999.

Bedazzled III Christmas Special at **Club Mwah!**; 10:30 p.m.

Bliss Acoustic at **Elbow Room**, Metrowalk, Pasig

December 25

"**Hun Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey**," an acrobatic and magical show, at the **Aliw Theater**, Star City, CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Call 911-5555 or 891-9999.

Juice and **Muzik Matrix** at **Suburbia**

Zyncxation at **Virgin Café**

December 26

"**Hun Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey**," an acrobatic and magical show, at the **Aliw Theater**, Star City, CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Call 911-5555 or 891-9999.

1st World Pyro Olympics at the Esplanade in **Bay City Central Business Park**, Pasay.

Silk at **Suburbia**

9th Avenue at **Virgin Café**

December 27

"**HUN Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey**," an acrobatic and magical show, at the **Aliw Theater**, Star City, CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Call 911-5555 or 891-9999.

1st World Pyro Olympics at the Esplanade in **Bay City Central Business Park**, Pasay.

Fire dancers and a surprise band will grace **Oakley and Reef Party** at **Club Paraw** in Boracay

Cadio at **Quisine**, 6750 Ayala Ave., Makati; 8:30 p.m.

Dimsum at **Suburbia**

604at Virgin Café

Pure Sounds at **Elbow Room**, Metrowalk, Pasig

December 28

" **HUN Mulan Fantasy Magical Journey**," an acrobatic and magical show, at the **Aliw Theater**, Star City, CCP Complex, Roxas Blvd., Pasay City. Call 911-5555 or 891-9999.

1st World Pyro Olympics at the Esplanade in **Bay City Central Business Park**, Pasay.

"**Rico J. Puno and Friends**" at **Coriks Bar**, Kingswood Arcade, Vito Cruz Ext. corner Pasong Tamo. Call 724-1762.

Freeverse and **South Border** at **Suburbia**

Dimsum and **Akafellas** at **Virgin Café**

Wednesday Jazz Festival with **Eddie K**, **Richard Merk** and **Sandra Lim** at **Merk's**, Greenbelt 3.

WORLD Pyro Olympics at Bay City in Pasay

nes for 2006

From page A2-1

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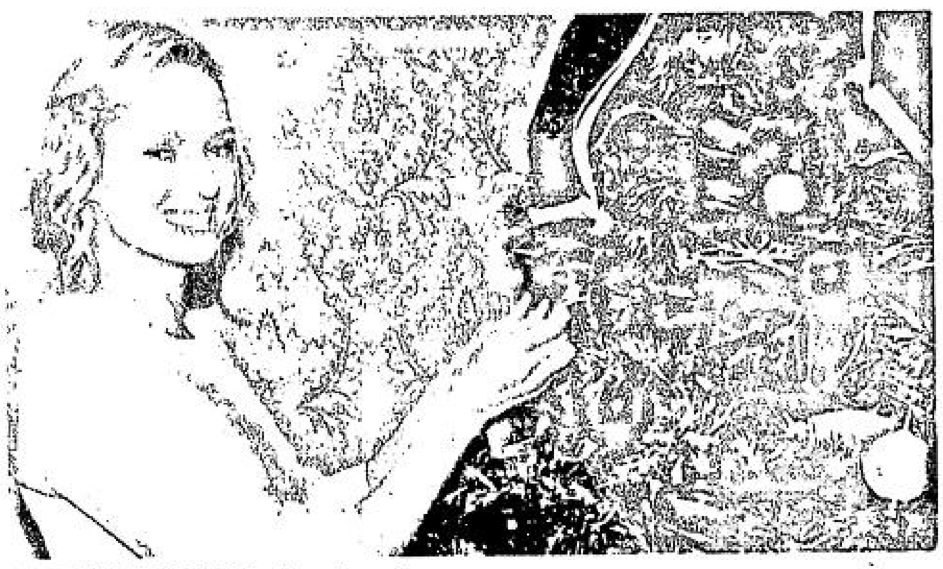

UMA THURMAN: US pullout from Iraq

MILLER: A trip to South India

Pierce Brosnan

(Watch him in "The Matador"—enough said.)

I never make resolutions. They have no meaning to me because I break them all the time. But I hope for good health, happiness and contentment with your family. You wish that your children do well. That the world leaders get their act together, sit down and communicate. You wish for the end of war, a cure for cancer-solutions to those issues that tear you apart every time you turn on CNN or pick up a newspaper.

(E-mail the columnist at rvnepales_5585@yahoo.com.)

MTRCB RATING ▶ PG-13 Children below 13 yrs. old will be allowed in accompanied by a parent or adult.
Ako Legal Wife
Mano Po 4?!
Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 23 at 4pm -Sm Fairview
Dec. 24 at 1pm - Parade of Stars
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall
8pm - Star City
Text WIFE to 4627 (Smart) and 2364 (Globe)
OPENS DECEMBER 25
MTRCB RATING PG-13
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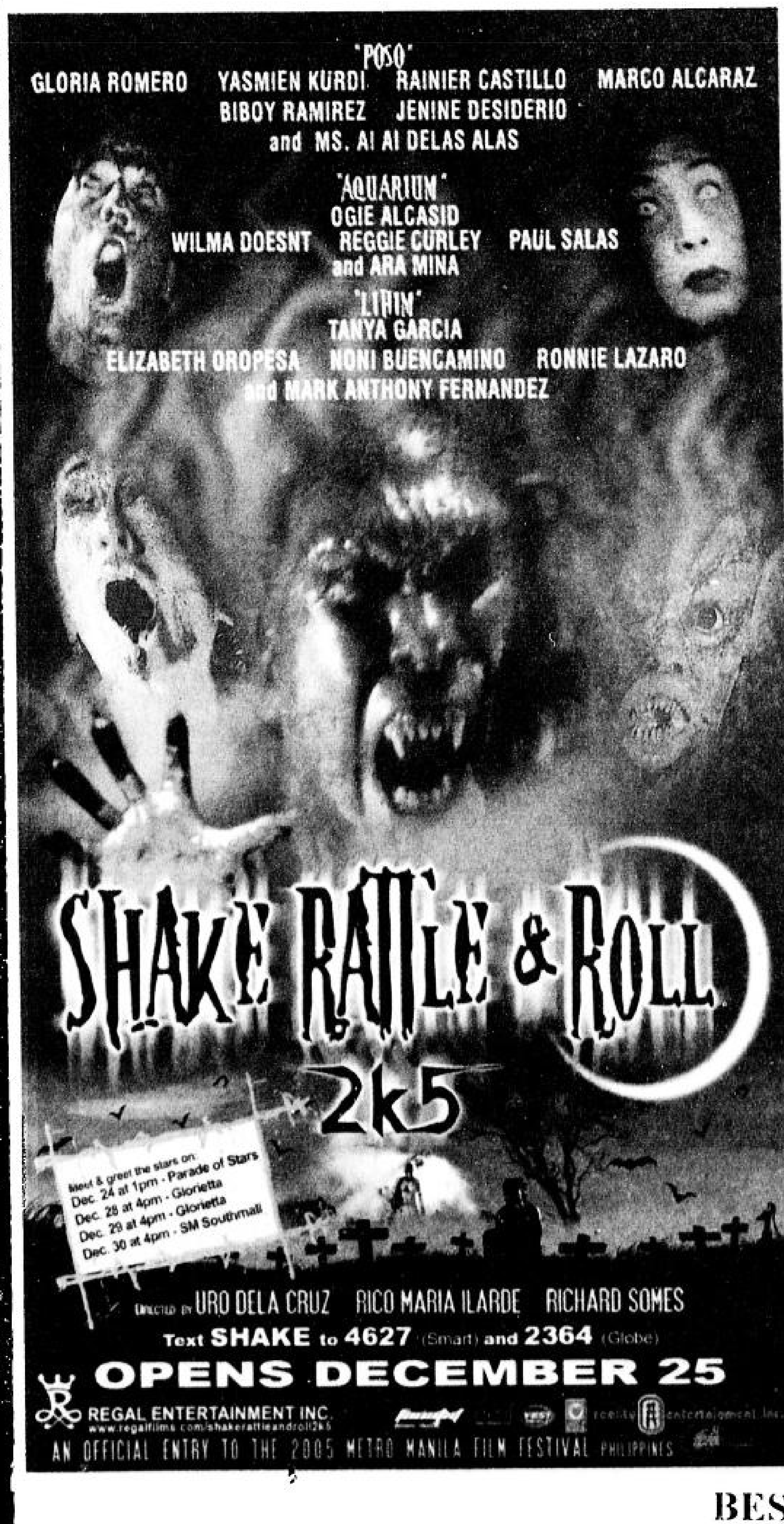
www.regalfilms.com/akolegalwife


"POSO"
GLORIA ROMERO YASMIEN KURDI RAINIER CASTILLO MARCO ALCARAZ
BIBOY RAMIREZ JENINE DESIDERIO
and MS. AI AI DELAS ALAS
"AQUARIUM"
OGIE ALCASID
WILMA DOESNT REGGIE CURLEY PAUL SALAS
and ARA MINA
"LIHIM"
TANYA GARCIA
ELIZABETH OROPESA NONI BUENCAMINO RONNIE LAZARO
and MARK ANTHONY FERNANDEZ
SHAKE RATTLE & ROLL
2k5
Meet & greet the stars on:
Dec. 24 at 1pm - Parade of Stars
Dec. 28 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 29 at 4pm - Glorietta
Dec. 30 at 4pm - SM Southmall
DIRECTED BY URO DELA CRUZ RICO MARIA ILARDE RICHARD SOMES
Text SHAKE to 4627 (Smart) and 2364 (Globe)
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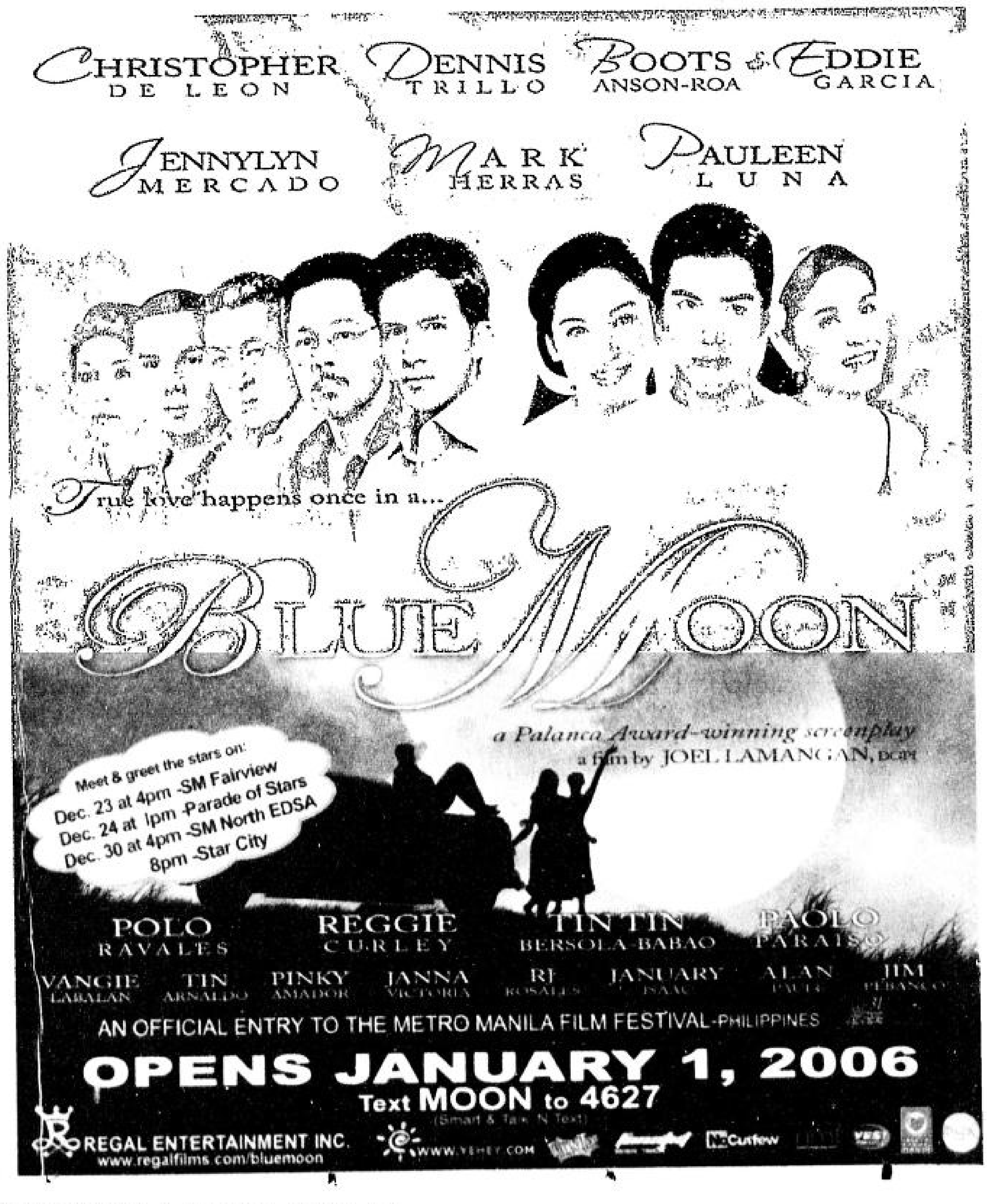
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JENNYLYN MERCADO MARK HERRAS PAULEEN LUNA
True love happens once in a...
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a Palanca Award-winning screenplay
a film by JOEL LAMANGAN, DGPI
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Dec. 24 at 1pm -Parade of Stars
Dec. 30 at 4pm -SM North EDSA
8pm -Star City
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VANGIE LABALAN TIN ARNALDO PINKY AMADOR JANNA VICTORIA RJ ROSALES JANUARY ISAAC ALAN PAULE JIM PEBANCO
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GALLERIA 632-9118

1 KING KONG • THX
1:40 5:20 9:00
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
3 KING KONG
2:10 5:50
4 KING KONG
12:40 4:20 8:00
5 KING KONG
11:00 2:40 6:20 10:00
6 KING KONG
4:50 8:30
7 IN HER SHOES
1:35 4:20 7:05 9:50
8 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 10:00
9 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
1:10 3:20 5:30 7:40 9:50
10 KISNA 12:40 3:50
BARSAAT 7:05 9:50

ERMITA 536-7809 to 12

1 KING KONG 1:50 5:20 8:50
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
12:00 2:30 5:00 7:30 9:50
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
12:00 2:00 4:00 6:00 8:00 10:00
4 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50
5 KING KONG
11:20 2:50 6:20 9:50
6 KING KONG
12:20 3:50 7:20
7 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
12:30 2:50 5:10 7:30 10:00

METRO EAST 682-8193 - 682-8199

1 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
12:00 3:00 6:00 9:00
2 KING KONG
10:25 2:10 5:50 9:40
3 KING KONG
2:10 5:55 9:40
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
12:50 2:50 4:50 6:50 9:00
5 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
1:00 3:40 6:20 9:00
6 KING KONG
5:15 9:00
7 KING KONG
5:15 9:00
8 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
1:40 4:00 6:20 9:00

NOVALICHES 935-3231 / 935-3229-30

1 BEAUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview
2 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 THE FOG
6 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview

CITISQUARE MALABON 288-2575

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 RESERVE
4 RESERVE

PIONEER 687-5378

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FAMILY STONE Sneak Preview
4 BEUTIFUL BOXER Sneak Preview

Kisna

THE WARRIOR POET

a motion picture by: ***Subhashi Ghal***
& w/ special appearance of ***Sushmita Sen***

A young Indian, Kisna, defies his family and brethen and shields a British girl Catherine from an enraged mob of nationalists. Catherine happens to be the young daughter of a ruthless British Deputy Commissioner. Kisna decides to escrt Catherine to the British High Commission in New Delhi, but before that he has to face opposition from his uncle, elder brother Shankar and a scheming, lusty and powerhungryprince, Raghuraj. During this journey, Kisna and Catherine's friendship blossoms into love, thereby complicating Kisna's life further. His relations with the girl he is engaged to, Laxmi are stained in the process

showing at
Robinsons Movieworld
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December 19 to 24

MTRCB Rating: PG-13
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STA. ROSA (049) 837-0907

1 KING KONG
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 IN HER SHOES
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
5 KING KONG

LIPA (043) 757-3661 / (043) 312-5870

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET OF FIRE
4 THE FOG

DASMARIÑAS (046) 852-2126 / (046) 416-4332

1 KING KONG
2 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 THE FOG

ANGELES (045) 892-2348

1 KING KONG
2 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

IMUS (046) 875-3838 / (046) 471-8188

1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 IN HER SHOES
4 THE FOG

STARMILLS (045) 876-1927 / (045) 961-5270

1 THE EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG

BACOLOD (034) 441-0453 / (034) 441-0459

1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & the GOBLET of FIRE
5 CHICKEN LITTLE
6 THE MYTH

ILOILO (033) [illegible]

1 KING KONG
2 THE FOG
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 THE MYTH
5 KING KONG

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Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows December 23 - 25, 30, 2005 Christmas Fireworks Display December 16 - 18, 23, 25, 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM	Acoustic Christmas Serenade feat. Chedi December 23, 2005 - 6 PM Blims / Automatic Center Exhibit Dec. 19 to 31, 2005	2005 Novellino - Manila Philharmonic Orchestra Concert Tour December 21, 2005

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GREENBELT

Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra Christmas Shows
December 23 - 25, 30, 2005
Christmas Fireworks Display
December 23, 25, 30 & 31, 2005; 9PM

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REPERTORY PHILIPPINES presents
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November 11 to December 18, 2005
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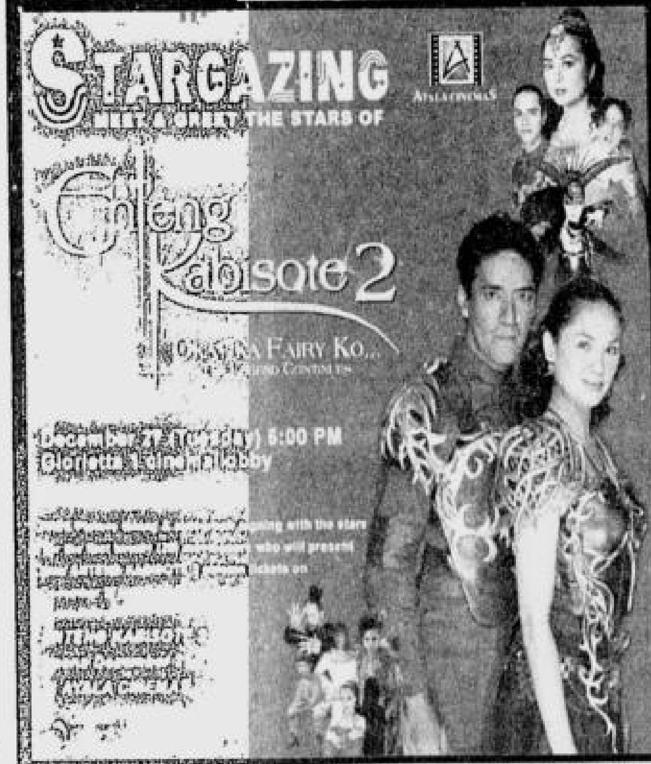
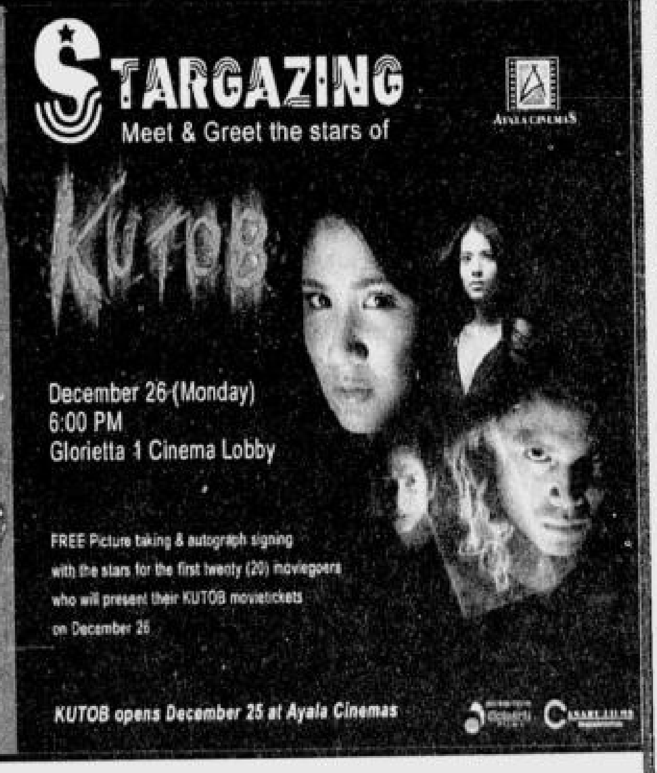
G1 GLORIETTA 1	1 THE FAMILY STONE	2 KINGKONG	3 KINGKONG	4 AN UNFINISHED LIFE
G4 GLORIETTA 4	1 KINGKONG	2 KINGKONG	3 THX KINGKONG 1:55, 5:35, 9:15 GUARANTEED SEATS	
	4 KISS KISS BANG BANG	5 CHICKEN LITTLE	6 KINGKONG	7 IN HER SHOES
GB1 GREENBELT 1	1 THE FAMILY STONE 12:55, 3:20, 5:45, 8:10	2 KINGKONG 1:40, 5:20, 9:00		
GB3 GREENBELT 3	1 THX KINGKONG 1:00, 4:45, 8:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	2 THX KINGKONG 2:00, 5:45, 9:30 GUARANTEED SEATS		
	3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, 9:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	4 THE FAMILY STONE 1:40, 4:05, 6:30, 8:55, 11:20 GUARANTEED SEATS	5 KINGKONG 3:00, 6:45, 10:30 GUARANTEED SEATS	
ATC ALABANG TOWN CENTER	1 THX KINGKONG	2 THE FAMILY STONE		
	3 BEAUTIFUL BOXER	4 KINGKONG	5 KINGKONG	
ACC AYALA CENTER CEBU	1 KINGKONG	2 KINGKONG	3 KINGKONG	4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN



STARGAZING
MEET & GREET THE STARS OF
Enteng Kabisote 2
OKAY KA FAIRY KO... THE LEGEND CONTINUES

December 27 (Tuesday) 5:00 PM
Glorietta 1 cinema lobby



STARGAZING
Meet & Greet the stars of
KUTOB

December 26 (Monday)
6:00 PM
Glorietta 1 Cinema Lobby

FREE Picture taking & autograph signing with the stars for the first twenty (20) moviegoers who will present their KUTOB movietickets on December 26

KUTOB opens December 25 at Ayala Cinemas

Customer Service text hotline: Customer Service text hotline:	0917 6095900 Glorietta - 752 7272; from 10am to 8pm Greenbelt - 757 4853; from 11am to 12mn
Alabang Town Center - Ayala Center Cebu -	842 2782; from 10am to 8pm (032) 231 5342 loc 324

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Free Seating Cinemas: P80.00

① King Kong
② Beautiful Boxer
③ King Kong
④ The Family Stone
⑤ King Kong

EVENTS! EVENTS!

MARKET!
MARKET!
Bonifacio Global City
The *fun* is in the finds

Christmas
Shopping Bag

1. Promo period is from Dec. 9 to 31, 2005.
2. For every P500 single or accumulated receipt purchase dated on the same day in any regular retail store, food choices, and Metro Department Store and Supermarket, shoppers will get 1 Christmas Shopping Bag.
3. A maximum of 4 shopping bags will be given to shoppers presenting single or accumulated receipts amounting to P2001 and over.
4. Shoppers will present their receipt to the Customer Service booth to redeem their Market! Market! shopping bag.

Per DTI-NCR Permit No. A2-580, Series of 2005

ROUNDUP

Furious Marissa

ACTRESS Marissa Delgado lost her cool at the Christmas party of the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office on Monday after a woman, said to be the daughter of PCSO PR Manager Manny Garcia, tried to prevent Delgado's dance troupe from performing during the program.

MARISSA Delgado

Delgado had brought some dancers from her MarDel promotion outfit upon the invitation of PCSO. The 20-year-old outfit fields Filipino entertainers and caregivers to Japan.

Delgado said her dancers, who had been asked to perform without a talent fee, were told to wait for two hours past the appointed time (7 p.m.). She said they also had to bring their own food and water. On top of this, Garcia's alleged daughter reportedly demanded to know who had invited them.

Strike Revilla, a member of the PCSO's board of directors, apologized to Delgado about the "glitch" after the dancers had finally performed and were about to leave. *Nini Valera*

GWEN Stefani and husband Gavin Rossdale

Hollaback baby

NEW YORK—Gwen Stefani, nominated for five Grammy Awards including album of the year for "Love.Angel.Music.Baby.," is pregnant with her first child, according to Us Weekly.

The 36-year-old pop star and Gavin Rossdale, 38, were married three years ago. The baby is due in June, the magazine reported Tuesday.

"We are delighted," Us Weekly quotes Rossdale's father, Douglas, as saying. Stefani's mother, Patti, also reportedly confirmed the pregnancy to the magazine. *AP*

Libel payout

LONDON—"Desperate Housewives" star Teri Hatcher has accepted libel damages from a tabloid which claimed she regularly had sex with men in a van outside her home, her lawyer told a court Friday.

The Daily Sport, which published the story in July and repeated it in August, agreed to pay "very substantial damages" and her legal costs, to print a front-page apology and promised not to repeat the allegations, attorney Simon Smith said.

The amount of damages was not disclosed. *AP*

TERI Hatcher

Back in court

LOS ANGELES—Actress Kim Basinger was back in court Tuesday, quibbling over custody matters in her ongoing battle with ex-husband Alec Baldwin.

The couple share joint custody of their 10-year-old daughter, Ireland.

Moments after Basinger entered the courtroom, Los Angeles Superior Court Commissioner Maren Nelson barred the press and public. Baldwin, who lives in New York, did not attend the hearing.

Basinger emerged nearly two hours later, wearing the same dark glasses and emotionless expression she had on the way in.

Her attorney, Neal Hersh, declined to discuss the case's particulars. *AP*

POWER PLANT
CINEMA
Rockwell Center, Makati City ☎ Tel. No: 8981440-41 DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND·EX

CHICKEN LITTLE GP 1:00,3:00,5:00,7:00,9:00	KING KONG PG13 2:25,5:55,9:25	FAMILY STONE PG13 12:30,2:55,5:20, 7:45,10:10
KING KONG PG13 1:00,4:30,8:00	KING KONG PG13 12:20,3:50,7:20	KING KONG PG13 3:10,6:40,10:10

SCREENING SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE WITHOUT PRIOR NOTICE. FOR VERIFICATION CALL 898 1440-41.

SHANG CINEPLEX

① KING KONG
MTRCB PG-13
12:30, 4:15, 8.00 PM

② KING KONG
MTRCB PG-13
1:30, 5.15, 9.00 PM

③ FAMILY STONE
MTRCB. PG-13
12:00, 2:30, 5:00, 7:30,10:00

④ KING KONG
MTRBC PG-13
2:30, 6:15, 10.00 PM

PREMIERE THEATRE KING KONG
MTRCB PG-13 2:00 5:45 9:30 PM
Movies and schedules are subject to change without prior notice

Catch the Cineplex Special
Be serenaded by the world-renowned San Miguel Philharmonic Orchestra and San Miguel Master Chorale in a one-of-a-kind Christmas Music Festival at Shangri-La Plaza's Grand Atrium, Level 2, on Friday, December 23. 7 p.m.

Regular Ticket Price
Cinemas 1 to 4 - P150
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CINEMA 1 KING KONG PG13 10:20, 1:55, 5:35, 9:15

CINEMA 2 KING KONG PG13 12:35, 4:15, 7:55

DOLBY DIGITAL SURROUND·EX

PROMENADE
GREENHILLS
...a dinertainment for all!
NOW SHOWING

CINEMA 3 FAMILY STONE PG13 10:45, 1:00, 3:15, 5:30, 7:45, 10:00

CINEMA 4 KING KONG PG13 10:50, 2:30, 6:10, 9:50

CINEMA 5 KING KONG PG13 11:25, 3:05, 6:45, 10:25

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MUSIC MUSEUM

January 27, 2005	JED MADELA	9PM
February 3 & 4	NINA&NYOY	9PM

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Araneta Center Leisure Guide

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CINEMA SCHEDULES

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ONLY P99 ADMISSION
P120 RESERVED SEATS
P140 HARRY POTTER
P150 KING KONG
GLOBE PLATINUM P249 / P299
DOLBY DIGITAL·EX

FOR INQUIRIES, PLEASE CALL TICKETNET AT 911-5555

KING KONG
12:35 / 2:25 / 3:00 / 3:35 / 4:10
6:00 / 6:35 / 7:10 / 7:45 / 9:35

GLOBE PLATINUM CINEMA
KING KONG
1:50 / 5:25 / 9:00

FAMILY STONE
1:30 / 4:10 / 6:50 / 9:30

CHICKEN LITTLE
12:30 / 2:30 / 4:30 / 6:30 / 8:30

...MAXIMO OLIVEROS
12:50 / 3:00 / 5:10 / 7:20 / 9:30

JUST LIKE HEAVEN
12:30 / 2:40 / 4:50

THE FOG
12:20 / 2:30 / 4:40

MERRY CHRISTMAS
7:00 / 9:30

IN HER SHOES
6:50 / 9:40

ALI MALL CINEMAS

❶ KING KONG
12:50 / 4:25 / 8:00

❷ HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET
12:00 R4 / 2:00 / 5:00 / 8:00

❸ IN HER SHOES
12:30 / 3:10 / 5:50 / 8:30

❹ BEAUTIFUL BOXER
12:10 / 2:50 / 5:30 / 8:10

❺ THE MYTH
12:45 / 3:15 / 5:45 / 8:20

DOLBY DIGITAL DTS SDDS

ARANETA COLISEUM EVENTS

SPELLBOUND MAGIC SHOW
Opens December 25

BACKSTREET BOYS - NEVER GONE TOUR
January 20, Friday 8 pm

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	Absolutely Christmas Holiday Bazaar ongoing until January 6 at the Ali Mall Exchange on the Ground Floor of Ali Mall

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[illegible]
[illegible] EDSA [illegible]
31st Metro Manila Film Festival Philippines 2005

GUARANTEED SEATS

THE PODIUM 633-8976
1 KING KONG
01:10FS/01:40MF/05:20
08:30LFS/09:00LMF/12:10END
2 KING KONG
12:15FS/11:40MF/04:40
07:30LFS/08:00LMF/11:10END

MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG
12:45FS/01:15FS/04:50
08:00LFS/08:30LMF/11:40END

CEBU (032) 231-3876
1 KING KONG
01:20FS/01:40MF/05:05
08:15LFS/08:30LMF/11:35END
2 KING KONG
11:00FS/11:15MF/02:40/06:05
09:13LFS/09:30LMF/12:35END
3 KING KONG
10:35FS/10:45MF/02:10/05:35
08:43LFS/09:00LMF/12:05END

METRO MANILA

SM MEGAMALL
1 KING KONG
2 MERRY CHRISTMAS
3 KING KONG
4 THE FOG
5 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
6 KING KONG
7 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
8 THE FAMILY STONE
9 KING KONG
10 KING KONG
11 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
12 THE FOG

SM CITY STA. MESA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 MERRY CHRISTMAS
8 CHICKEN LITTLE
9 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
10 THE FOG

SM CITY BICUTAN
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY TONE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 KING KONG

SM VALENZUELA NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY FAIRVIEW
1 FAMILY STONE
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 HARI NG SABLAY
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG
9 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
10 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
11 CHICKEN LITTLE
12 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM CITY SOUTHMALL
1 KING KONG
2 FAMILY STONE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
7 THE MAN
8 THE FOG
9 BEAUTIFUL BOXER
10 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

SM SUPERCENTER SUCAT
1 FAMILY STONE
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 JUST LIKE HEAVEN

SM CITY NORTH EDSA
1 KING KONG
2 BEAUTIFUL BOXERS
3 FAMILY STONE
4 MERRY CHRISTMAS
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 THE FOG
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG

SM CITY MANILA
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 FAMILY STONE
5 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
6 KING KONG
7 KING KONG
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
9 THE MYTH
10 IN HER SHOES
11 THE FOG
12 KING KONG

SM SAN LAZARO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 FAMILY STONE
5 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
6 THE FOG

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LUZON

SM CITY PAMPANGA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARI NG SABLAY
5 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
6 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY BAGUIO
1 KING KONG
2 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
3 THE FOG
4 KING KONG

SM MOLINO NOW OPEN
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE FOG
4 FAMILY STONE

SM CITY BACOOR
1 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
2 THE FOG
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
7 FAMILY STONE
8 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE

SM CITY MARILAO
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
4 KING KONG

SM CITY DASMARINAS
1 KING KONG
2 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG

SM CITY LUCENA
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE
4 THE MYTH

SM CITY BATANGAS
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 EXORCISM OF EMILY ROSE

VISAYAS AND MINDANAO

SM CITY CEBU
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 KING KONG
4 HARRY POTTER & THE GOBLET OF FIRE
5 THE FOG
6 THE MYTH
7 KING KONG
8 KING KONG

SM CITY ILOILO
1 JUST LIKE HEAVEN
2 RESERVED
3 KING KONG
4 KING KONG
5 KING KONG
6 THE FOG
7 RESERVED
8 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS

SM CITY DAVAO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 ANG PAGDADALAGA NI MAXIMO OLIVEROS
4 THE FOG
5 KING KONG
6 KING KONG

SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO
1 KING KONG
2 KING KONG
3 THE MYTH
4 KING KONG

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WHAT'S INSIDE
Del Monte layering /B2
P15B seen to prop up agri, infra /B5

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DOE to lead Malampaya oil project

INDICATORS

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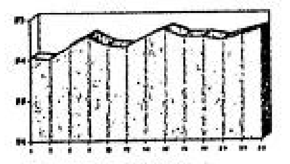

DECEMBER

PESO-DOLLAR RATE

P 53.25 = $1

¥ 117.50 = $1

As of 5 p.m., Dec. 22, 2005

GOLD: $494.60-495.10

per ounce Hong Kong, Dec. 22, 2005

Stocks close higher

SHARE PRICES YESTERDAY closed 0.17 percent higher on selected buying of blue chips ahead

STOCKS/ B2

Team working on bidding guidelines

By Abigail L. Ho

MALACAÑANG HAS DIRECTED THE DEPARTMENT OF Energy to lead the extraction and development of oil from the Camago-Malampaya oil and gas field.

Executive Order No. 473, signed on Nov. 29, tasked the DOE with pursuing the immediate exploration, development and production of crude oil from the Malampaya oil rim.

The DOE, through Philippine National Oil Co., will lead discussions on the definition of terms of service for the project.

The EO said the DOE and PNOC could consult members of the Malampaya deep water gas-to-power project consortium, "with the end in view of optimizing the joint operations of the concerned stakeholders in the production of natural gas and crude or black oil from the Camago-Malampaya reservoir."

PNOC could also tap third parties to participate in the project. The prospective partners, however, should abide by the yet-to-be-drafted terms of services for the project.

A team, composed of representatives from the consortium and the DOE, is now working on guidelines for the bidding of the oil rim development project.

Malampaya consortium members Shell Philippines Exploration BV (Spex) and Chevron Texaco Malampaya LLC had relinquished their right to the Malampaya oil rim as they did not deem the project commercially viable.

Considering that the oil rim was expected to yield only around 25 million barrels of oil, the $700 million to $900 million needed to extract and develop it was hardly worth the risk, consortium spokesperson and Spex manager for external affairs Facundo Roco said.

He said that since the oil rim was located beneath the Malampaya gas, extracting the oil might place at risk the Malampaya gas reserves. Under current production, the field supplies natural gas to three power plants with a total capacity of 2,700 megawatts.

Based on these, consortium members gave up last September their rights to the oil rim, subject to conditions that would protect their investments in the gas find.

The Malampaya joint venture partners offered to cooperate with the DOE and the third parties who will develop the oil rim, subject to conditions that will safeguard the integrity of the natural gas reservoir and the existing

DOE/ B3

Peso nears 2-1/2-yr high

THE PESO EDGED TOWARD A TWO-AND-A-half-year high yesterday on strong remittances from overseas workers before the Christmas holidays.

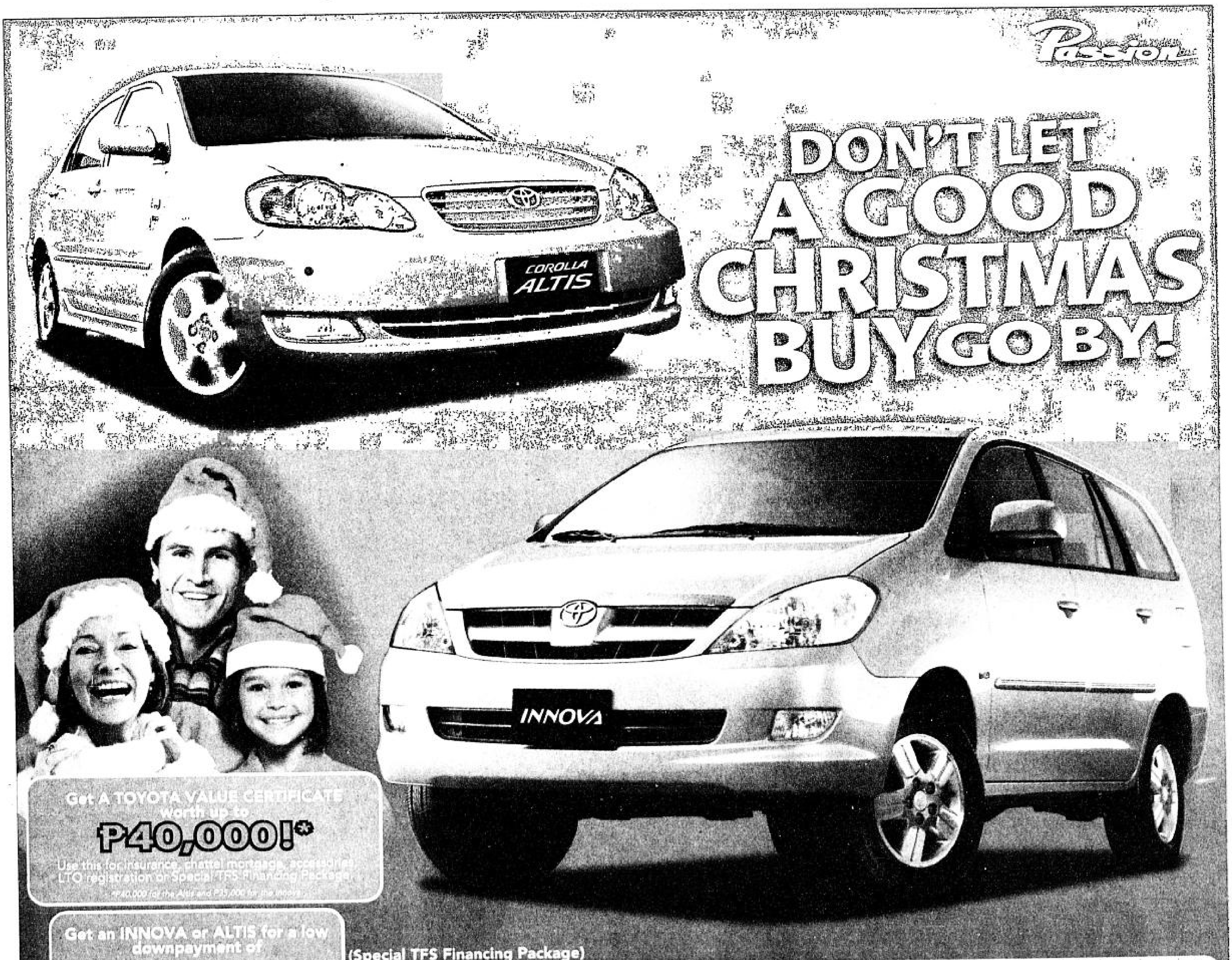
The peso rose to as high as 53.22 to $1, closing in on last week's two-and-a-half year-high of around 53.16. The currency is Asia's best performer this year, having gained 5.8 percent since the start of January.

"The remittances started to kick in again," said a currency dealer. He said the central bank had not intervened in the currency market in recent days to stem the peso's gains.

The currency has been helped by record remittances from an estimated eight million Filipinos working abroad and from an improvement in the country's fiscal balance thanks to an expanded sales tax imposed this year.

The government expects remittances to hit a record $10 billion this year.

PESO/ B3



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Altis 1.8 E A/T	878,000	100,000	66,560	45,836	36,536	26,072	21,038	18,160
Altis 1.6 E A/T	800,000	100,000	59,539	41,000	32,688	23,326	18,822	16,244
Altis 1.6 E M/T	765,000	100,000	56,388	38,831	30,962	22,004	17,828	15,385
Altis 1.6 J M/T	708 000	100,000	51 257	35 297	28 150	20 088	16 209	13 985

MODEL	SRP	DOWNPAYMENT	12	18	24	36	48	60
Innova 2.5 G A/T	1,045,000	100,000	82,039	56,495	45,014	32,122	25,919	22,384
Innova 2.5 G M/T	980,000	100,000	76,188	52,466	41,807	29,834	24,073	20,787
Innova 2.0 G A/T	985,000	100,000	76,638	52,776	42,054	30,010	24,215	20,910
Innova 2.0 G M/T	930,000	100,000	71,687	49,366	39,341	28,074	22,653	19,559
Innova 2.5 E M/T	885,000	100,000	67,636	46,576	37,121	26,489	21,374	18,454
Innova 2.5 J M/T	798,000	100,000	59,804	41,183	32,829	23,427	18,903	16,317
Innova 2.0 J M/T	748 000	100,000	55 303	38 084	30 362	21 607	17 483	15 089

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Del Monte layering

COCKTALES

Victor C. Agustin

IF YOU HAD A DIFFICULT TIME DIVINING how new Del Monte Pacific overlord Jose "Butch" Campos Jr. has layered his acquisition of the Singapore-listed food and juice company, we have news for you.

He and his partner San Miguel Corp. have layered it some more.

NutriAsia Pacific Ltd.—the joint venture of Campos, San Miguel and Binondo supertrader Ang Tin Yu ("Ayu" to friends)—has undergone "corporate restructuring" even before the British Virgin Islands-incorporated vehicle could formally assume control of Del Monte Pacific.

NutriAsia Pacific is now 100-percent owned by NutriAsia San Miguel Holdings, which in turn is 42.2-percent owned by San Miguel Foods Asia Ltd. and 57.78 percent by NutriAsia Inc., another British Virgin Islands post office box company.

San Miguel Foods Asia Ltd. is, in turn, 100-percent owned by San Miguel Holdings Ltd., which in turn is wholly owned by San Miguel International, a 100-percent subsidiary of San Miguel Corp.

If San Miguel, Campos and even the Lorenzos continue to be tight-lipped about how they snatched the deal from the First Pacific Group, it is because the so-called quiet period imposed by the Singapore Stock Exchange is still underway.

In any case, here are the names of the key backroom boys who packaged and labored what could easily be the merger-and-acquisition deal of the year:

- Reynaldo David, president of the Development Bank of the Philippines;
- Eduardo Francisco, Banco de Oro chief of corporate and investment banking department;
- Rafael Consing Jr. and Susan Prado, both of The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corp.; and
- Joy Singson, corporate lawyer-wife of Finance Undersecretary Gabriel "Jay" Singson Jr., who used to work with the Lorenzos in Macondray, was quick to clarify that he and his wife maintain a Chinese wall in regard to each other's business and official functions.

According to the grapevine, DBP and BDO, on account of their long-standing relationships with Del Monte, stepped in to provide financing to the Campos dream just "two weeks to deadline."

Realizing that the deal was too big to finance by themselves, the two banks and Campos brought in HSBC, as well as to provide advice on the overall acquisition financing strategy.

Apparently, it was HSBC that in turn brought in San Miguel,

COCKTALES/ B5

PRESS RELEASE **PHILIPPINE GOLD PLC.**

Philippine Gold Plc. Announces The Appointment of Johan Raadsma As Regional Manager For Asia

Phil. Gold Plc., a wholly owned subsidiary of Thistle Mining Inc., has recently appointed Mr. Johan Raadsma as Regional Manager for Asia.

Mr. Raadsma will have overall responsibility for the Manila Regional Operational Headquarters, the Masbate Gold Project, and mine exploration/development projects conducted by Philippine Gold Plc through its local subsidiaries within the portfolio. In particular, Mr. Raadsma will assume responsibility for the finalization of the bankable feasibility study of the Masbate Project. Mr. Raadsma is familiar with the Masbate Project, having been the Manager of Technical Services, Philippine Gold Plc. over the period 1996 to 1999.

The appointment of Mr. Raadsma provides a strong technical and operational position for Masbate Project. He has had over 25 years of experience in mining, civil construction and resource development, during which time he has directed and participated in major projects in USA, Australia, Philippines, Indonesia and West Africa. Most recently, Mr. Raadsma was the Director and Head of Technical Services Unit, N.M. Rothschild & Sons (Australia) Limited, Sydney, Australia.

****

DISNEY VISA

Enjoy the Magic of Hong Kong Disneyland with Visa

All Philippine-issued Visa and Visa Electron cardholders who make purchases using their Visa cards from now to 24 January 2006 can enter the Enjoy the Magic of Hong Kong Disneyland lucky draw, which entitles seven winning families of four on a package trip to the Hong Kong Disneyland. Visa International has entered into a global alliance with Disney as it continues to bring exciting programs that will make payment more fun and rewarding. This alliance has been extended to include Hong Kong Disneyland, which made Visa the official card of the Hong Kong theme park.

To celebrate this alliance, Visa has launched a special promotion that enables lucky cardholders to visit the Disney theme park for free. From now to 24 January 2006, a total of seven weekly draws will be held to give away one family of four Package Trip to Hong Kong Disneyland per draw. VISA Debit, Classic, Gold, Platinum, and pre-paid cardholders can register for the promotions via SMS, the internet, or call centers (Metro Manila - 637-2788; Provincial - Toll Free # 1800-1888-2591).

The seven lucky families of four will enjoy an extraordinary family vacation at Hong Kong Disneyland. At the park, the families can enjoy a cruise down the exotic Jungle River, a fun ride on Space Mountain, and going on adventures with Winnie the Pooh. The package comes complete with free airfare, a two-night stay at the Hong Kong Disneyland Hotel, and a chance to experience Character Breakfast at the hotel, eight fast passes that reduce waiting time for popular attractions, and HK$5,000 pocket money. With these package inclusions, the lucky winners will indeed experience a vacation filled with excitement and marvel for free!

Visa International Country Manager for the Philippines James Dixon said, "As the world's leading payment brand that provides convenient, secure, and rewarding ways to pay or be paid, Visa continues to enable as many people as possible to experience the benefits of card payment in the Philippine market. We want our Filipino cardholders to have the opportunity to experience the Disney magic. A trip to Hong Kong Disneyland creates a lifetime of memories that the whole family, especially the children, will never forget."

Information about this lucky draw can be found in print advertisements, statement inserts, posters, tent cards, danglers, flyers, and other promotional materials.

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PHILIPPINE STOCK EXCHANGE

(As of December 22, 2005)

STOCKS	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE	VOLUME
BANKS & FINANCIAL SERVICES					
BANKS					
Banco de Oro Univ. Bank	33.5	34	33.5	34	671,300
Bank of the Phil. Islands	54.5	55	54	55	768,000
China Banking Corp.	610	620	610	620	430
Citystate Savings Bank	17.75	17.75	17.75	17.75	400
Export and Ind. Bank Inc.	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	480,000
Equitable PCI Bank Inc.	58.5	59	57.5	57.5	216,200
International Exch. Bank	20.75	20.75	20.5	20.5	23,100
Metropolitan Bank & Trust	33	33	32.5	33	431,900
Philippine National Bank	31.5	31.5	31.5	31.5	5,600
Security Bank Corp.	33	33.5	33	33.5	101,200
Union Bank of the Phil.	32	32	32	32	300
FINANCIAL SERVICES					
First Abacus Financial	0.65	0.65	0.65	0.65	480,000
First Metro Invest. Corp.	24.5	25.5	24.5	25.5	700
Manulife Financial Corp.	3150	3150	3140	3140	130
Phil. Stock Exchange Inc.	140	140	140	140	4,100
Sun Life Financial Inc.	2115	2115	2115	2115	560
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL					
COMMUNICATION					
ABS-CBN Broadcasting Corp.	13	13	13	13	30,400
Digital Telecom Phils Inc.	0.91	0.92	0.91	0.92	1,420,000
Globe Telecom Inc.	715	725	715	720	58,970
Ipeople Inc.	2.9	2.9	2.85	2.85	86,000
Island Info and Tech Inc.	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	1,000,000
Pilipino Tel. Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.4	3.45	946,000
Phil. Long Dis Tel Co.	1785	1795	1775	1775	33,420
Philweb Corp.	0.015	0.015	0.015	0.015	3,800,000
POWER, ENERGY & OTHER UTILITIES					
Manila Electric Co. A	14	15	14	15	26,700
Manila Electric Co. B	22.25	22.5	21.75	22	636,600
Manila Water Co. Inc.	6.3	6.3	6.3	6.3	523,000
Petron Corp.	4.3	4.4	4.3	4.4	2,857,000
Salcon Power Corp.	1.68	1.68	1.68	1.68	5,000
Trans-Asia Oil and Energy	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	300,000
TRANSPORTATION SERVICES					
Asian Terminals Inc.	1.74	1.74	1.72	1.72	244,000
Aboitiz Trans. Sys. Corp.	1.7	1.7	1.7	1.7	278,000
Int'l Container Term'l Sv	9.4	9.5	9.4	9.4	515,000
Lorenzo Shipping Corp.	1.24	1.28	1.24	1.26	157,000
CONSTRUCTION & OTHER RELATED PRODUCTS					
Engineering Equip. Inc.	0.75	0.8	0.75	0.79	5,790,000
Holcim Philippines Inc.	4.4	4.4	4.3	4.4	635,000
Phil Nat'l Const. Corp.	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	5,000
FOOD, BEVERAGES & TOBACCO					
Alaska Milk Corp.	3.45	3.45	3.4	3.4	343,000
Ginebra San Miguel Inc.	22	22	22	22	61,800
Jollibee Foods Corp.	42	42.5	41.5	42	544,900
San Miguel Corp. A	64	64.5	63.5	64	143,200
San Miguel Corp. B	87.5	87.5	86.5	86.5	122,600
Universal Robina Corp.	18.5	18.75	18.5	18.5	57,800
Vitarich Corp.	0.29	0.29	0.29	0.29	710,000
HOLDING FIRMS					
Ayala Corp.	305	312.5	305	310	268,820
Aboitiz Equity Ventures	4.95	4.95	4.9	4.95	335,000
Ajo.Net Holdings Inc.	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	600,000
A. Soriano Corp.	2.08	2.08	2.08	2.08	240,000
Alcorn Gold Res. Corp.	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	0.0065	21,000,000
ATN Holdings Inc.	1.28	1.28	1.28	1.28	5,000
Baguio Gold Holdings Corp.	0.71	0.71	0.71	0.71	50,000
Bacnotan Cons Indus Inc.	9.1	9.1	9.1	9.1	60,000
Boulevard Holdings Inc.	0.165	0.165	0.16	0.16	1,300,000
Benpres Holdings Corp.	1.1	1.1	1.1	1.1	8,557,000
A Brown Company Inc.	0.96	0.97	0.96	0.97	230,000
Crown Equities Inc.	0.18	0.18	0.18	0.18	70,000
Southeast Asian Cement	0.31	0.32	0.3	0.32	3,730,000
DMCI Holdings Inc.	3.1	3.15	3.1	3.15	514,000
Filinvest Dev. Corp.	1.2	1.2	1.2	1.2	102,000
First Phil Hldgs Corp.	48.5	48.5	48	48	315,800
House Of Investments Inc.	0.94	0.94	0.94	0.94	30,000
J.G. Summit Holdings Inc.	3.4	3.45	3.4	3.45	211,000
Medco Holdings	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	172,500,000
Megaworld Corp.	1.26	1.26	1.22	1.26	2,572,000
Metro Pacific Corp.	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	7,290,000
Paxys Inc.	5.9	6	5.9	5.9	169,000
East Asia Power Res. Corp.	0.21	0.21	0.21	0.21	100,000
Solid Group Inc.	0.49	0.49	0.49	0.49	140,000
SM Investments Corp.	239	240	239	239	121,280
Unioil Res. & Holdings Co	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	200,000
MANUFACTURING, DISTRIBUTION & TRADING					
Euro-Med Lab. Phil. Inc.	3.65	3.65	3.65	3.65	6,000
HOTEL, RECREATION & OTHER SERVICES					
Belle Corp.	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.99	2,540,000
Fairmont Holdings Inc.	0.71	0.71	0.7	0.7	120,000
Leisure & Resorts Corp.	1.5	1.5	1.4	1.4	201,000
BONDS, PREFERRED & WARRANTS					
ABS-CBN Hldgs. Corp. (PDR)	12.75	12.75	12.75	12.75	48,000
OTHERS					
Centro Escolar University	9.6	9.6	9.5	9.5	139,000
PROPERTY					
Ayala Land Inc.	9.8	9.9	9.8	9.9	4,606,000
Cebu Holdings Inc.	1.08	1.08	1.08	1.08	462,000
C & P Homes Inc.	2	2	1.98	1.98	80,000
Cyber Bay Corp.	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	280,000
Empire East Land Inc.	0.41	0.41	0.41	0.41	340,000
Filinvest Land Inc.	1.32	1.34	1.32	1.34	3,628,000
Highlands Prime Inc.	2.26	2.28	2.24	2.28	90,000
Kuok Phil. Properties	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	10,000
Fil-Estate Land Inc.	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	10,000
Philippine Estates Corp.	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.14	50,000
Robinsons Land Corp.	5.7	5.7	5.7	5.7	2,000
Phil Realty and Holdings	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	370,000
SM Development Corp.	1.38	1.38	1.38	1.38	17,000
SM Prime Holdings Inc.	7.9	8.1	7.9	8.1	5,390,000
MINING					
Atlas Cons. Min & Dev't	5.6	5.6	5.6	5.6	87,000
Benguet Corp. A	7.2	7.2	7.1	7.2	43,000
Lepanto Cons Mng. Co. A	0.215	0.22	0.215	0.22	2,690,000
Lepanto Cons. Mng. Co B	0.245	0.245	0.245	0.245	6,680,000
Manila Mining Corp. A	0.019	0.019	0.018	0.018	47,500,000
Manila Mining Corp. B	0.028	0.028	0.027	0.028	82,200,000
Omico Corp.	0.005	0.0055	0.005	0.0055	53,000,000
Philex Mining Corp. A	1.32	1.36	1.32	1.36	1,254,000
Philex Mining Corp. B	1.68	1.68	1.66	1.68	3,188,000
Semirara Mining Corp.	26.5	27	26.5	26.5	218,000
United Paragon Mining Co.	0.22	0.22	0.22	0.22	60,000
OIL					
Oriental Pet. & Min. A	0.007	0.007	0.007	0.007	75,000,000
Oriental Pet. & Min. B	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	0.0075	9,000,000
The Philodrill Corp. A	0.34	0.34	0.34	0.34	40,000
Petroenergy Res. Corp.	3.75	3.8	3.75	3.75	11,000

PLDT tops Asiamoney poll

PHILIPPINE LONG DISTANCE Telephone Co. has been chosen as the best-managed company in the Philippines by investors and analysts for the third straight year in a survey conducted by Asiamoney.

"The winners are corporations that stood out across all industry sectors for their accomplishments in 2005. They all demonstrated an impressive combination of financial and business performance, management strategy and vision, in addition to displaying a strong commitment to shareholder value, operational efficiency and corporate governance principals," said Asiamoney in a statement.

Asiamoney, an influential financial magazines, conducts a yearly survey among mega-funds, hedge funds and brokerages worldwide to find out the best-managed companies in Asia.

PLDT president and CEO Napoleon L. Nazareno said this third-in-a row win for PLDT validated the soundness of the company's strategy and its effective implementation of plans to thrive in a very competitive environment.

CURRENCIES

December 22, 2005 Country	Unit	Euro Equivalent	Dollar Equivalent	Peso Equivalent
United States	Dollar	0.844880	1.000000	53.5200
Japan	Yen	0.007202	0.008524	0.4562
United Kingdom	Pound	1.472795	1.743200	93.2961
Hong Kong	Dollar	0.108989	0.128999	6.9040
Switzerland	Franc	0.643375	0.761499	40.7554
Canada	Dollar	0.724286	0.857265	45.8808
Singapore	Dollar	0.506371	0.599341	32.0767
Australia	Dollar	0.618688	0.732279	39.1916
Bahrain	Dinar*	2.241656	2.653224	142.0005
Saudi Arabia	Rial	0.225296	0.266660	14.2716
Brunei	Dollar	0.504858	0.597550	31.9809
Indonesia	Rupiah	0.000086	0.000102	0.0055
Thailand	Baht	0.020642	0.024432	1.3076
UAE	Dirham	0.230037	0.272272	14.5720
Euro	Euro	1.000000	1.183600	63.3463
Argentina	Peso	0.278471	0.329598	17.6401
Brazil	Real	0.364959	0.431965	23.1188
Denmark	Kroner	0.134098	0.158718	8.4946
India	Rupee	0.018705	0.022139	1.1849
Malaysia	Ringgit	0.223560	0.264606	14.1617
Mexico	New Peso	0.079540	0.094144	5.0386
New Zealand	Dollar	0.572994	0.678196	36.2970
South Africa	Rand	0.132770	0.157146	8.4105
Korea	Won	0.000830	0.000982	0.0526
Taiwan	Nt Dollar	0.025438	0.030108	1.6114

Stocks close higher

From page B1

of thelong Christmas weekend, dealers said.

They said the market would likely move sideways in Friday's session before staging a comeback after the Christmas break.The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index added 3.53 points to 2,078.58. It traded between 2,072.80 and 2,084.76.

Volume reached 546.47 million shares worth P618.94 million.

The broader all-shares index advanced 2.99 points to 1,262.73. Gainers outpaced losers 36 to 22, while 47 stocks were unchanged.

Financial markets will be closed on Dec. 26 for a public holiday. *AFP*

Peso ...

From page B1

The peso also got a boost from the country's high-yielding bonds, which have attracted foreign investors.

Philippine bonds offer the highest interest rates in Asia after Indonesian bonds.

However, dealers said the peso was unlikely to hit the psychologically important 53-per-dollar mark this year because of strong demand for dollars from local importers and companies for repaying overseas debt.

"Besides, the market is still short in dollars. So there may be a bout of short covering by the end of the year," a Manila dealer said.

IDEAglobal said in a report that many investors had expected the peso to weaken by the yearend as remittances ebbed and because of overseas debt repayments in the new year.

"The price action has belied the market's expectation of peso weakness into the yearend," the research house said. *Reuters*

DOE ...

From page B1

development.

Roco added: "If properly attended to, with the right mitigating technical solutions, (the oil extraction) can be done with little risk. But one of our conditions would be that if anything happens that threatens the gas project, (the third-party oil rim developer) will have to stop."

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Investments of Variable Life Insurance Contracts	Current Week Dec. 20, 2005	Last Week Dec. 13, 2005
Bond Fund - Peso	1.33127	1.31552
Managed Fund - Peso	1.44746	1.43771
Growth Fund - Peso	1.09969	1.11080
Bond Fund - US Dollar	1.1993	1.1899

* Note: These investments of variable life insurance contracts are not mutual funds. Life insurance products are regulated by the Insurance Commission

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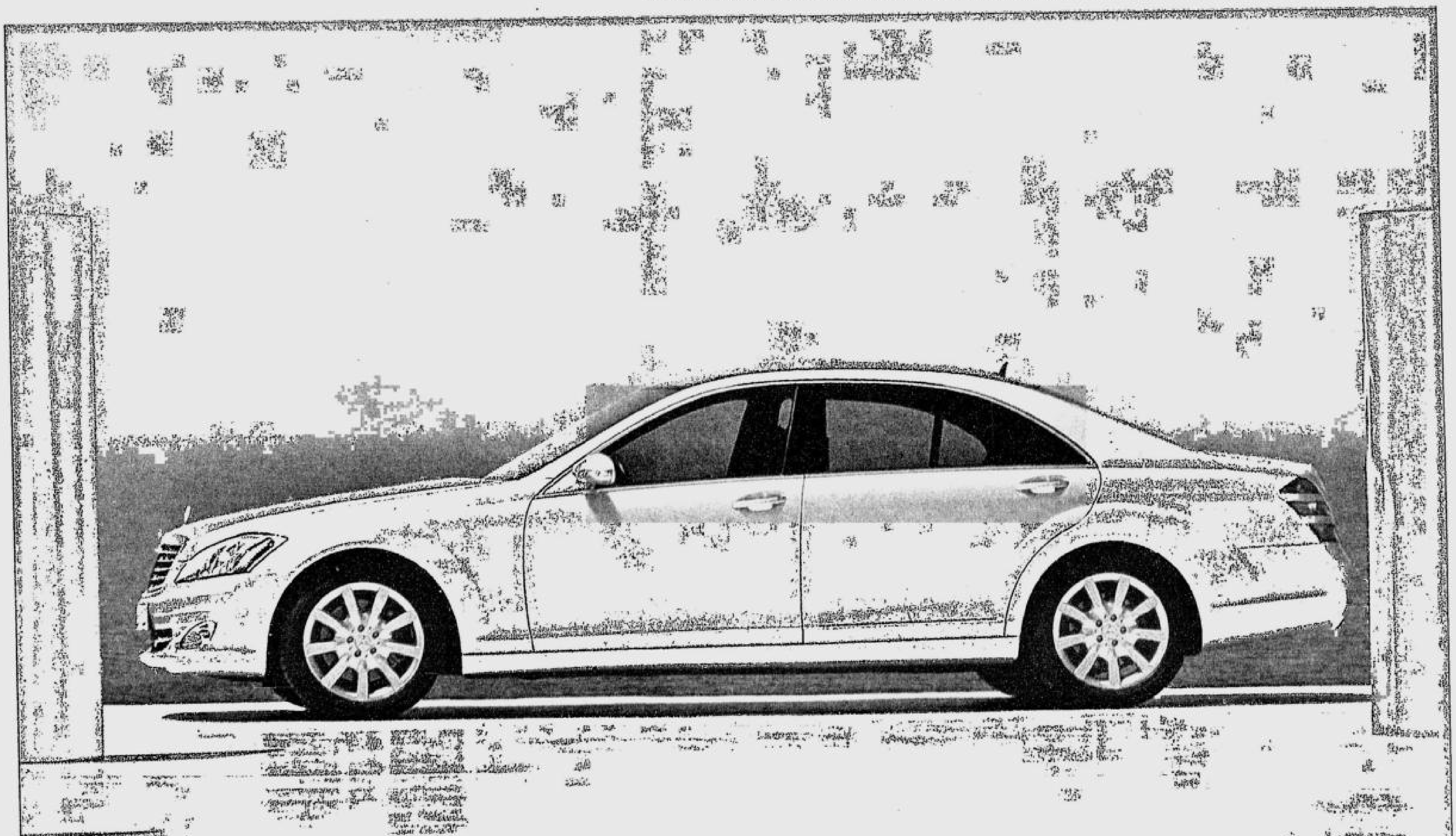

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Cannes winnings or brand building?

By Minyong Ordoñez
Chair, Publicis Manila
Contributor

THERE ARE THE TWO SCHOOLS of thought in the creative departments of ad agencies today: the Cannes chasers and the brand builders.

Cannes is the genre of out-of-the-box creatives, whose adherents, mostly the new young generation of ad writers, aspire to win awards in the most famous hall of them all, the Cannes Festival, the Oscar of advertising.

Brand builders are more traditional.

They are driven by sales and market performance, at least 25 years of experience in advertising doing brand building. They work in partnership with manufacturing companies applying the multidisciplinary requirements of marketing and communications strategy.

Winning awards is immaterial to them. Awareness of brand message and market gains are.

Both schools worship the goddess of creativity. But their attitudes and outlook differ in creating advertising.

Cannes wannabes

Cannes 'wannabes' are licentious and rule-breakers, obsessed with execution. They presume that the advertising will manage to deliver a brand message regardless of whether the creative execution is irrelevant or relevant, strategic or general.

The selling job will be done by the distinctiveness of the advertising rather than the distinctiveness of the brand benefit. The assumption is if the advertising is distinct, the brand will be distinct.

Another presumption is that the consumers' benefit is what the consumer perceives it to be and that the ad is a mere play for attention.

Think-out-of-the-box. Intrusive. Interruptive. These buzzwords are the big criteria in creating ads intended for Cannes.

Brand builders

Brand builders think more rationally in creating ad campaigns. They try to secure the efficiency and effectivity of their ads with consumer tests on both the product and its communication execution before launching the campaign.

The marketing department and ad agency team have a historical knowledge of the brand's progress to help them adopt the best practices and avoid mistakes of the past.

Brand builders are long-term planners not peripatetic job hoppers or bounty hunters. They acquire tenure and create a body of work necessary for brand building.

They attach great value on brand equity as a long- term positioning but constantly enhancing competitiveness through product improvement and the spinning off of variants to generate trial and new usages.

Examples of long-term brand equities are Safeguard's superior germ protection and Colgate's oral hygiene expertise.

Both brands have been dominant market leaders for many decades; Colgate since the 1950s and Safeguard since the 1970s. Other examples are Jollibee (Langhap Sarap) since the 1980s and Surf (Lumen, maparaang misis).

Few actual demos

Cannes fans have very few actual demo cases. Most Cannes creations are either local or regional award winners but rarely represent mainstream products in the huge Philippine mass market. They are usually done for small or medium advertisers with no real equity or size to consider.

Still others are tactical ads whose messages are short-term flashes in the pan and are not part of a grand design of a product's long-term image. Although they claim high attention, their results in the market are fleeting and short-lived.

As soon as the ad is withdrawn, consumer demand is also withdrawn, demonstrating the quick wear-out and easy surfeit of interruptive ad executions.

When creative writers of the Cannes species hit the jackpot in the marketplace, they are called geniuses. If they bomb out, it's plain stupidity.

Challenges

Several market dynamics are challenging the new generation of creatives to pursue the Cannes route. Among them are the thick huge advertising clutter, the evolving sophistication in consumer aesthetics and visual literacy, the fickleness of consumers due to the quick birth and death of a myriad new products.

The age of discontinuity predicted by Peter Drucker in the early 60s is here. So is the age of short attention span.

While Cannes chasers take the big leap of faith (you can't pretest rule-breaking ideas) brand builders enjoy the best of both worlds, since their brands are household names such as Milo, or Tide, or Johnson's Baby Powder, brands that have been built and nurtured for decades.

Any improvement in product formula and creativity in advertising is an enhancement, not (I hope) a derailment. You never dislocate the brand's *suki*. Remember the debacle when Coke changed its formula in the 70s?

Cannes chasers have the upper hand in the intrusive aspect of advertising. They are users of various figures of speech; hyperbole, wit, fantasy, parody, lampoon, irony and double speak.

In print they are minimalist, shunning verbals, relying on visuals, an art director's medium to convey symbolic messages.

Both Cannes chasers and brand builders recognize that one of the most powerful vessels of brand image and message is people's culture.

Culture content is an excellent element to affirm the brand's affinitive connectivity with the sociology of its consumers. It also reflects the corporate personality and philosophy of the advertiser manufacturer.

The last Ad Congress theme "Ready for the world?" seems to reflect an inferiority complex. Why do we ask? Because we don't have Cannes trophies like Thailand, the U.S., France and others? Because most of our ads are native and not completely graspable to foreigners?

On the other hand, brand builders bask in superiority complex. The Philippines has a galore of successful brands built through planned campaigns over the years. San Miguel Beer, Milo, Nescafe, Nido, Lucky Me, Del Monte, UFC Catsup, Purefoods Hotdogs, Magnolia Chicken, Jack & Jill Snacks, Hope, Ginebra, Alaxan, Enervon, Bench and Kamiseta.

Marketing today is constantly facing the challenges of relentless changes in technology, globalized economy, lifestyles and the homogenization of wants and needs.

Today "proprietary" properties are available to any businessmen, information technology empowers consumers, retail chains wield more power from path to purchase to point of purchase, pricing is the biggest determinant in consumer purchase.

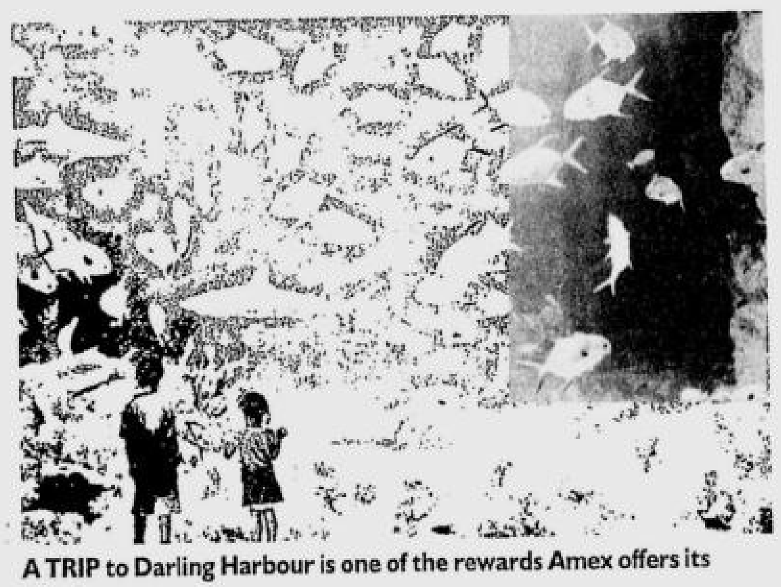
The question that advertising people nervously ask is, "Will the brand still be important in the years to come?" What new role will the manufacturer of goods take? After the unbundlings, will the ad agencies be extinct?

Only one thing seems certain. The altar of creativity will always be lighted, and the creators of sales messages will always be around spouting new buzzwords.

Can Cannes chasers be brand builders? Yes, of course. They know the rules. But clients must legislate.

Can brand builders be Cannes chasers? Difficult. It's not their cup of tea, and they are not daredevils.

(The author is chair of Publicis Manila. Feedback at Minyong.Ordonez@publicis-manila.com.)



A TRIP to Darling Harbour is one of the rewards Amex offers its clients.

Credit cards use rewards to keep clients

AS THE COMPETITION AMONG credit card companies heats up, the rewards they are offering to clients are scaling up. These range from gift certificates—which are the most preferred by clients—to electronics, appliances, and the ever popular air miles which can be redeemed for air tickets.

As card members get used to the idea of collecting gifts simply by using their credit cards, card companies are challenged to outdo themselves in showing appreciation to clients.

Patty Pronove-Henson, card marketing head of American Express Bank Philippines, discloses: "It is not enough to offer a catalogue of the cheapest items and services you can provide. What you offer must also be perceived as truly rewarding by your members."

For American Express' peso platinum card members, these include dining vouchers at highly rated restaurants, aromatherapy massages, luggage and home appliances from established and respected brands—and even Flamenco lessons and—hear this—the many attractions of Darling Harbour and Sydney Tower in Australia. At Darling Harbour, one can explore the depths of the underwater world and marvel at the colorful marine fauna at the Sydney Aquarium. "You've got to know your clientele. This means knowing their dreams and aspirations—which are what the Flamenco and underwater world experience are all about," she said.

But whether one is targeting American Express' upscale peso platinum market or a wider audience, travel remains the biggest attraction, according to Grace D. Limjap, American Express card acquisition head. All major card companies offer reward points that can be exchanged for air miles, which can then be used to redeem air tickets to popular destinations.

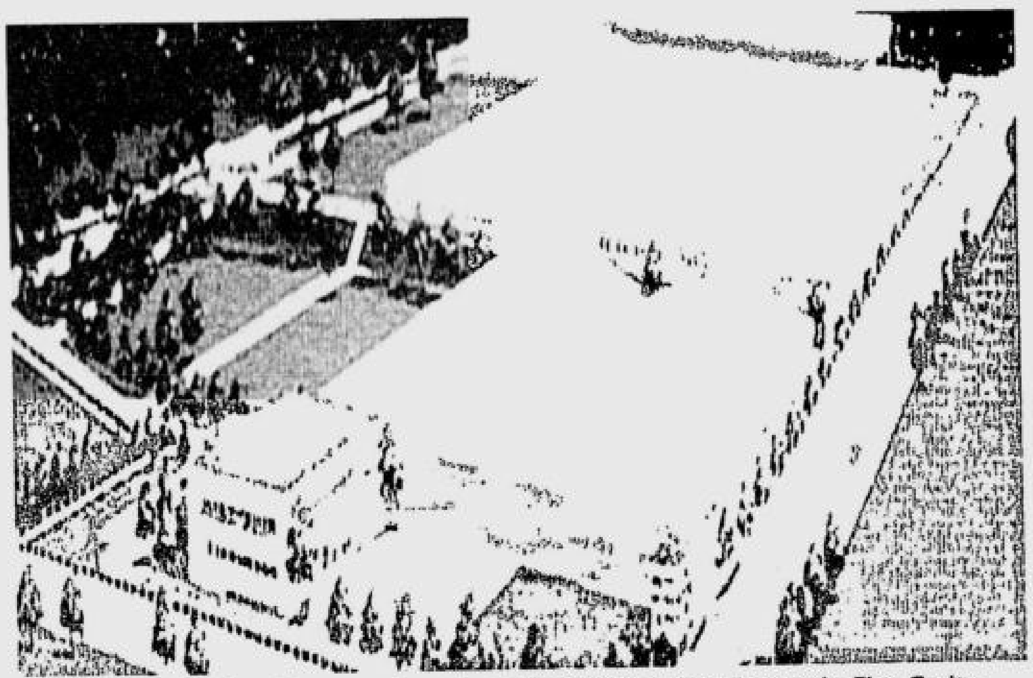
But American Express has moved significantly ahead in the past few months by offering the fastest way to earn air miles, that is, one mile for every P22.50 instead of P45 until the end of the year. Moreover, it has partnered with six frequent flyer programs which have tie-ups with as many as 50 airlines. Other cards will require P35 to P90 to earn one air mile and are limited to one or tied up with only three programs at most.

In just a few months, she discloses, peso platinum card members have converted as much as over four million membership rewards points to air miles. To distinguish itself from other card companies, American Express designed its rewards programs so that points don't expire for as long as a card member continues to maintain his good standing. "This means more opportunities for members to redeem tickets and travel," Limjap emphasized.

Card members have also redeemed 65 million membership rewards points and enjoyed a total of P30 million in hotel discount privileges which is another feature of the card. In addition, card members have used their American Express peso platinum cards to enjoy complimentary access to the Miascor Lounge at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport. The latter, according to Limjap, has been especially useful to American Express card members who are frequent flyers.

"Experienced travel counselors and personal assistants who can make hotel and restaurant bookings are also at card members' beck and call 24/7 by phone in eight countries in the Asia Pacific," she said. The travel counselors can customize travel plans with flight schedules and provide visa requirements.

Filipinos buy more bath fixtures



HOCHENG Philippines Corp. employs about 1,000 Filipinos in its plant at the First Cavite Industrial Estate.

ALTHOUGH MILLIONS OF FILIPINOS remain without toilet bowls in their houses, the country has become a major exporter of bathroom fixtures to 20 countries.

Taiwanese owned Hocheng Philippines Corp. or HCG claims it is now the number manufacturer of ceramics products in the Philippines.

The seeming slowdown in the local economy has not affected local demand of their bathroom fixtures as first nine-month sales went up by 6.4 percent to P970.19 million for January to October this year from P911.29 million from the same period last year.

The increase in local demand may be traced to HCG's expansion of outlets to 500 nationwide and increased its production to 1.2 million pieces a year. This led to a higher market share to 40 percent. HCG undertook a $3.5 million expansion the past two years.

HCG which employs over 1,000 in the Philippines and over 100,000 worldwide, also went on heavy promotion during the first half of the year, to increase sales. Its Euro-inspired bathroom fixtures with compact designs appealed to a fast growing market.

"We replaced bulky-designed fixtures with minimalist-designed, more flexible and stylish ones that are more practical but also maintain exceptional functions." said HCG senior national sales manager David Chang.

However, exports slowed down by 14 percent to P359 million during the first three quarters of this year from the P417 million exports during the same period last year.

HCG marketing assistant for Marketing Services Florence Baylon, says there is a big domestic market for bathroom fixtures. However there is also good export potential and HCG is expanding its market abroad. Today it sells to Taiwan, Malaysia, Korea, Indonesia, USA, Vietnam, Riyadh, KSA, Qatar, Cambodia, Singapore, China, Kuwait.

Recognizing the big dearth of toilets in homes, Florence says they regularly donate water closets and toilet bowls to the rural areas especially to public schools.

HCG's production plant is in a 10--hectare property in the First Cavite Industrial Estate set up in 1995 at a cost of $45 million. It has plants in Taiwan, China and the Philippines. *Margie Q. Espino*

HSBC ties up with Tagaytay Highlands

HSBC RECENTLY INKED A PACT WITH Tagaytay Highlands where Highlands' members (Tagaytay Highlands International Golf Club, The Country Club at Tagaytay Highlands and Tagaytay Midlands Golf Club) will get the following perks: For Existing Mabuhay Miles Visa cardholders—Upon enrollment in the auto-charge arrangement, members can auto-charge all their monthly dues and expenses for guaranteed free miles.

This will make payment of club dues and expenses easier for members plus, they get the chance to fly via PAL for free. As an added bonus, auto charged dues and expenses will earn double the miles until March 2006.

For new applicants—they will get all of the above plus a 2-year waiver on annual fee—the annual mileage fee for Mabuhay Miles Visa classic card (or first year annual fee waiver for Mabuhay Miles Visa Gold).

The program will be introduced to members in January 2006. Tagaytay Highlands continues to forge premium relations for its valued members.

Present during the signing were Claire Ann Yap (SVP and head of cards, HSBC), Warner Manning (CEO, HSBC), Willy N. Ocier (vice chairman, Tagaytay Highlands), Jerry C. Tiu (president, Tagaytay Highlands) and Nick Celdran (general manager, Tagaytay Highlands).

Brandy to beef up marketing in 2006

FUNDADOR BRANDY IS AIMING FOR A bigger market share in the Philippines by bringing the brand closer to the market.

Fundador will have an extensive campaign to highlight the fact that the brand is the first Spanish brandy. A lot of media and promotional activities will be implemented next year to further strengthen this fact.

Additionally, 2006 will mark renewed activation of Fundador's distribution network by adding a complete sales force dedicated in ensuring that Fundador is found in every shelf in the Philippines.

Fundador is now being marketed locally by Maxxium, the global spirits distribution and sales company. Maxxium is also the company behind Absolut Vodka, Jim Beam Bourbon, Macallan Single Malt Whisky and Remy Martin Cognac.

Vince Santos, marketing director for Maxxium Philippines, says the global spirits distributor has a good track record as far as introducing, promoting and establishing brands are concerned.

"Maxxium has proven to grow brands in markets where it is present. With the expertise and passion of Maxxium, we are confident that the brand will continue to grow in the market," Santos said.

"We are a major player in the global spirits market and aim to achieve a top three position in the most important markets around. In the Philippines, we are No. 1. Our core activities reflect our key goals which are delivering ongoing growth to the spirits we represent, and constantly increasing the economic value of our company," Santos added.

Maxxium is equally owned by Highland Distillers, V&S Vin & Spirit AB, Remy-Cointreau, and Jim Beam Brands Worldwide Inc.

Santos disclosed that the Philippines represents an exciting market for Maxxium. The distribution conglomerate is creating Maxxium Philippines in response to the growth potential of the market.

At the moment, Maxxium's brands are doing very well in the local market. Santos said Absolut has been active with its promotions and press activities while Remy Martin has been in the forefront of a campaign to make cognac contemporary. "We see Remy Martin to continue being the favorite cocktail base," Santos said.

On the other hand, Jim Beam Bourbon has been well received in bars where it is being promoted. "Jim Beam mixed with cola is really suited to the Filipino palette. We have received positive responses from those who have tried it. In fact, a lot have shifted to this very easy to mix drink. Moreover, Jim Beam is affordable for Filipinos," Santos added.

The Maxxium executive also disclosed that all Maxxium brands will be heavily promoted in the country.

"We will make all our brands more accessible and relevant to its respective consumers. Fundador in particular will have a greater presence in the provinces. We will bring our products closer to its market. Consumers will find out that our brands are more superior as compared to others."

₱15B seen to prop up agri, infra

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE GOVERNMENT WANTS TO SPEND SOME P15 billion out of the P35 billion it "saved" this year to pump prime the economy in the first quarter.

Trade Secretary Peter B. Favila yesterday said that the money would go to basic social services, particularly projects related to infrastructure, health and agriculture.

"The Cabinet secretaries are looking at ... dikes and irrigation projects, which could provide jobs at least for the duration of these projects," he said.

According to the trade chief, the government is expected to go over its budget by P180 billion this year. But the Department of Budget and Management and the National Economic and Development Authority reported that it only spent about P145 billion beyond its resources.

Favila said that based on preliminary discussions in the Cabinet, only part of the so-called "multi-agency fund" was expected to be used in the next quarter since spending all of it would mean overshooting the expenditure ceiling for 2006.

The decision to spend the "savings" was reached in last Tuesday's Cabinet meeting.

Earlier, President Macapagal-Arroyo ordered that the entire amount be spent within three months.

Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita was quoted as saying that the unused funds would be allotted to at least five priority areas—food, health, housing, infrastructure and education.

Favila said the Cabinet was still working out the details on where the money would go.

"This is actually a nice problem, how to spend money," he said. "I foresee a good start for the country next year."

Cocktales

From page B2

specifically San Miguel president Ramon Ang, after Campos' initial partner, Sumitomo Fruits, dropped out of the equation about a week ago, according to one account, before D-day.

According to the pro-Campos grapevine, Campos himself tapped former Security Bank president and Marcos financial adviser, Rolando Gapud, now based in Hong Kong, for additional advice.

Flavor of the month

It looks like the power-related headaches of the Lopezes have again spilled over to the judiciary and their North Luzon Expressway.

The Supreme Court has just asked the Lopez-controlled tollway operator, Manila North Tollways Corp., and the government to comment on the case filed by Representatives Imee Marcos, Ronaldo Zamora, Luis Asistio, Emmanuel Joel Villanueva, Erico Basilio Fabian, Renato Magtubo, Rodolfo Plaza and Antonio Serapio.

The congressmen and their related NGOs have asked the high court to nullify what they say was the Ramos government's "Piatco-style" award to the Lopezes of the rehabilitation, operation and extension of the toll road.

Chavez chatter shattered

The "facts" of Francisco Chavez have been disputed yet again, this time by Deputy Ombudsman for Luzon Victor Fernandez.

Fernandez wrote to say that Chavez was "gravely mistaken" when the latter claimed, as was published in the Dec. 5 Cocktales column, that the dismissal of his twin complaints against GMA adviser Roberto R. Romulo was a "midnight" decision of outgoing Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo.

Fernandez even attached both copies of the decisions, signed Nov. 16 by prosecutor Lourdes Padre Juan, reviewed by acting director Adoracion Agbada, recommended by Assistant Ombudsman Pelagio Apostol, before they were finally approved by Fernandez on Nov. 25.

The Ombudsman even gave the former solicitor-general a refresher course on government procedures, saying it should be the Office of the President, not the Ombudsman, that Chavez should ask for a copy of Romulo's statement of assets and liabilities.

Heard through the grapevine

IBP president Jose Manuel Cadiz, who has lately been publicly protesting against the quality of governance of Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, has himself been found wanting by no less than the Supreme Court.

Read Justice Conchita Carpio Morales' resolution on AC 6554 dated Dec. 14, 2005 and you will have a different perspective on Cadiz, Accra lawyer Rogelio Vinluan and their fellow board members in the Integrated Bar of the Philippines. *(Email: cocktales_pdi@pldtdsl.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)*

Projects worth ₱500M get tax perks

THE BOARD OF INVESTMENTS approved last week tax perks for three projects worth P500.8 million through its one-day approval process.

Trade Undersecretary Elmer C. Hernandez said that 54 projects, with a combined worth P37.5 billion, have been approved under the simplified registration procedure.

All-Filipino firm Philippine Agriculture Land Development and Mill (PALM) Inc. was qualified for a tax holiday and other incentives for its P481.75-million venture in Carmen, Bohol.

International Ying Ming Industrial Co. Inc. proposed to lay out some P17.5 million in a garments factory in Guiguinto, Bulacan.

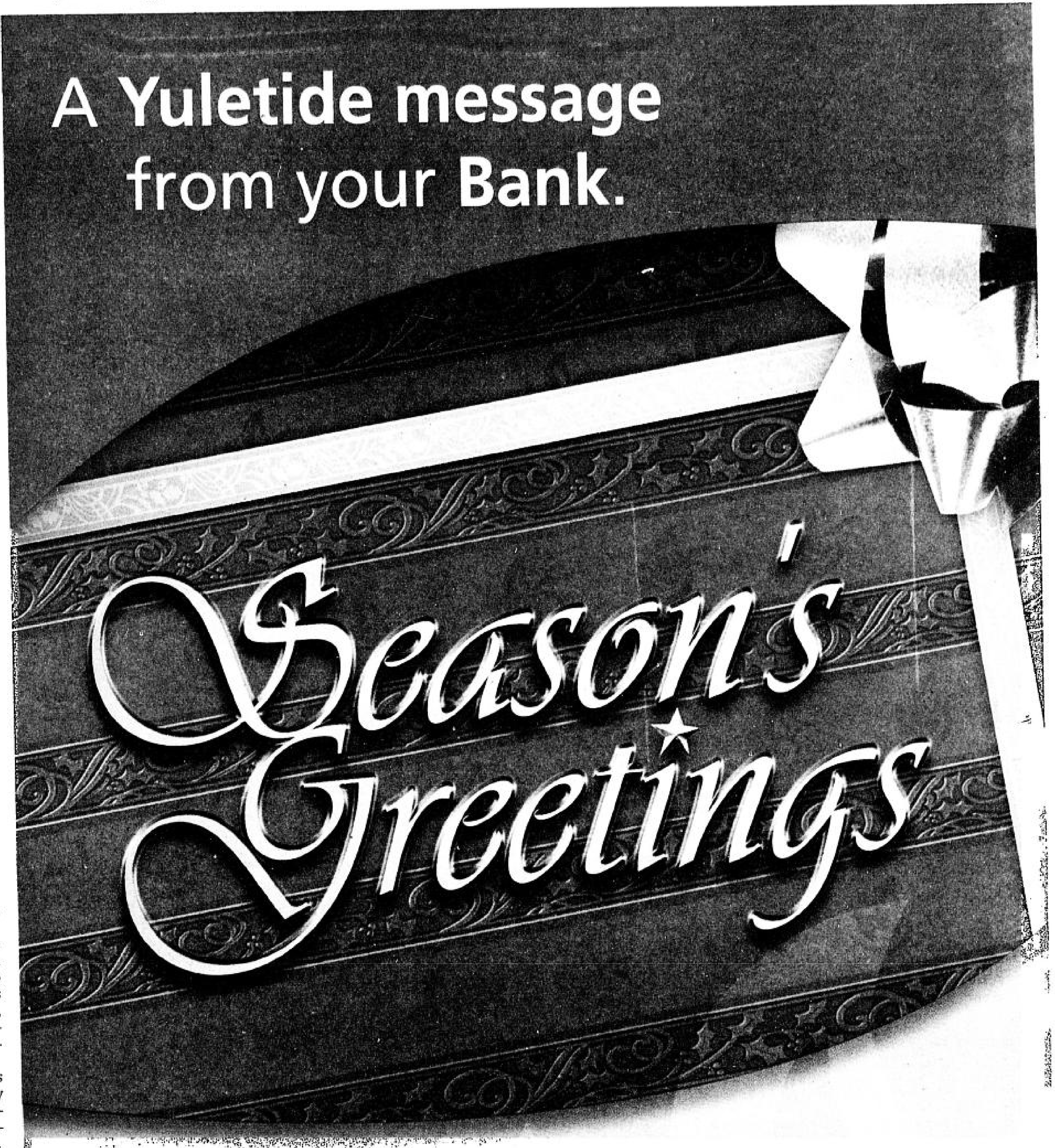
Absolute Transcription Services Inc. is investing P1.6 million in a medical transcription operation in Quezon City.

The three projects were given non-pioneer status, which qualified them for a four-year tax holiday plus other fiscal and non-fiscal perks.

Once fully operational, the projects are expected to create a total of 425 new direct jobs. *Ronnel W. Domingo*

Investment Funds of Wealth Builder and Wealth Secure	UNIT PRICES (in Php)	
	Dec. 19, 2005	Dec. 12, 2005
Fixed Income Fund	1.092692	1.084527
Balanced Fund	1.073089	1.073724
Equity Fund	1.028851	1.048397

These investment funds are specific to variable life insurance contracts and are not considered mutual funds. Life Insurance products are regulated by the Insurance Commission.
The weekly unit prices are also available at www.insularlife.com.ph.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Republic of the Philippines
Department of Labor and Employment
NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS COMMISSION
Quezon City

THE 2005 REVISED RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS COMMISSION

Pursuant to the provisions of Article 218 of Presidential Decree No. 442, as amended, otherwise known as the Labor Code of the Philippines, the following Revised Rules of Procedure governing arbitration proceedings before the Labor Arbiters and the Commission are hereby adopted and promulgated:

RULE I

TITLE AND CONSTRUCTION

SECTION 1. TITLE OF THE RULES. - These Rules shall be known as the "2005 Revised Rules of Procedure of the National Labor Relations Commission".

SECTION 2. CONSTRUCTION. - These Rules shall be liberally construed to carry out the objectives of the Constitution, the Labor Code of the Philippines and other relevant legislations, and to assist the parties in obtaining just, expeditious and inexpensive resolution and settlement of labor disputes.

SECTION 3. SUPPLETORY APPLICATION OF THE RULES OF COURT. - In the absence of any applicable provision in these Rules, and in order to effectuate the objectives of the Labor Code, the pertinent provisions of the Rules of Court of the Philippines may, in the interest of expeditious dispensation of labor justice and whenever practicable and convenient, be applied by analogy or in a suppletory character and effect.

RULE II

DEFINITION OF TERMS

SECTION 1. DEFINITIONS. - The terms and phrases defined in Article 212 of the Labor Code, as amended, shall be given the same meanings when used herein.

As used herein, "Regional Arbitration Branch" shall mean any of the regional arbitration branches or sub-regional branches of the Commission.

RULE III

PLEADINGS, NOTICES AND APPEARANCES

SECTION 1. COMPLAINT. -

a) A complaint or petition is a pleading alleging the cause or causes of action of the complainant or petitioner. The names and addresses of all complainants or petitioners and respondents must be stated in the complaint or petition. It shall be signed under oath by the complainant or petitioner, with a declaration of non-forum shopping.
b) A party having more than one cause of action against the other party, arising out of the same relationship, shall include all of them in one complaint or petition.
c) No amendment of the complaint or petition shall be allowed after the filing of position papers, unless with leave of the Labor Arbiter or the Commission.

SECTION 2. CAPTION AND TITLE. - In all cases filed with the Commission or with any of its Regional Arbitration Branches, the party initiating the action shall be called the "Complainant" or "Petitioner", and the opposing party the "Respondent".

The full names of all the real parties in interest, whether natural or juridical persons or entities authorized by law, shall be stated in the caption of the complaint or petition, as well as in the decisions, resolutions or orders of the Labor Arbiter or the Commission.

SECTION 3. ISSUANCE OF SUMMONS. - Within two (2) days from receipt of a complaint or amended complaint, the Labor Arbiter shall issue the required summons, attaching thereto a copy of the complaint or amended complaint. The summons shall specify the date, time and place of the mandatory conciliation and mediation conference in two (2) settings.

SECTION 4. PROHIBITED PLEADINGS AND MOTIONS. - The following pleadings and motions shall not be allowed and acted upon nor elevated to the Commission in all cases covered by these Rules:

a) Motion to dismiss the complaint except on the ground of lack of jurisdiction over the subject matter, improper venue, *res adjudicata*, prescription and forum shopping;
b) Motion for a bill of particulars;
c) Motion for new trial;
d) Petition for relief from judgment when filed with the Labor Arbiter;
e) Petition for *certiorari*, *mandamus* or prohibition;
f) Motion to declare respondent in default;
g) Motion for reconsideration or appeal from any interlocutory order of the Labor Arbiter.

SECTION 5. FILING AND SERVICE OF PLEADINGS. - All pleadings in connection with the case shall be filed with the appropriate docketing unit of the Regional Arbitration Branch or the Commission, as the case maybe.

The party filing the pleadings shall serve the opposing parties with a copy thereof and its supporting documents in the manner provided for in these Rules with proof of service thereof.

SECTION 6. SERVICE OF NOTICES AND RESOLUTIONS. -

a) Notices or summons and copies of orders, shall be served on the parties to the case personally by the Bailiff or duly authorized public officer within three (3) days from receipt thereof or by registered mail; Provided that in special circumstances, service of summons may be effected in accordance with the pertinent provisions of the Rules of Court; Provided further, that in cases of decisions and final awards, copies thereof shall be served on both parties and their counsel or representative by registered mail; Provided further that in cases where a party to a case or his counsel on record personally seeks service of the decision upon inquiry thereon, service to said party shall be deemed effected upon actual receipt thereof; Provided finally, that where parties are so numerous, service shall be made on counsel and upon such number of complainants, as may be practicable, which shall be considered substantial compliance with Article 224 (a) of the Labor Code, as amended.
For purposes of appeal, the period shall be counted from receipt of such decisions, resolutions, or orders by the counsel or representative of record.
b) The Bailiff or officer serving the notice, order, resolution or decision shall submit his return within two (2) days from date of service thereof, stating legibly in his return his name, the names of the persons served and the date of receipt, which return shall be immediately attached and shall form part of the records of the case. In case of service by registered mail, the Bailiff or officer shall write in the return, the names of persons served and the date of mailing of the resolution or decision. If no service was effected, the service officer shall state the reason therefor in the return.

SECTION 7. PROOF AND COMPLETENESS OF SERVICE. - The return is *prima facie* proof of the facts indicated therein. Service by registered mail is complete upon receipt by the addressee or his agent; but if the addressee fails to claim his mail from the post office within five (5) days from the date of first notice of the postmaster, service shall take effect after such time.

SECTION 8. APPEARANCES. -

a) A lawyer appearing for a party is presumed to be properly authorized for that purpose. In every case, he shall indicate in his pleadings and motions his Attorney's Roll Number, as well as his PTR and IBP numbers for the current year.
b) A non-lawyer may appear as counsel in any of the proceedings before the Labor Arbiter or Commission only under the following conditions:
    (1) he represents himself as party to the case;
    (2) he represents a legitimate labor organization, as defined under Article 212 and 242 of the Labor Code, as amended, which is a party to the case: Provided, that he presents: (i) a certification from the Bureau of Labor Relations (BLR) or Regional Office of the Department of Labor and Employment attesting that the organization he represents is duly registered and listed in the roster of legitimate labor organizations; (ii) a verified certification issued by the secretary and attested to by the president of the said organization stating that he is authorized to represent the said organization in the said case; and (iii) a copy of the resolution of the board of directors of the said organization granting him such authority;
    (3) he represents a member or members of a legitimate labor organization that is existing within the employer's establishment, who are parties to the case: Provided, that he presents: (i) a verified certification attesting that he is authorized by such member or members to represent them in the case; and (ii) a verified certification issued by the secretary and attested to by the president of the said organization stating that the person or persons he is representing are members of their organization which is existing in the employer's establishment;
    (4) he is a duly-accredited member of any legal aid office recognized by the Department of Justice or Integrated Bar of the Philippines: Provided, that he (i) presents proof of his accreditation; and (ii) represents a party to the case;
    (5) he is the owner or president of a corporation or establishment which is a party to the case: Provided, that he presents: (i) a verified certification attesting that he is authorized to represent said corporation or establishment; and (ii) a copy of the resolution of the board of directors of said corporation, or other similar resolution or instrument issued by said establishment, granting him such authority.
c) A non-lawyer who appears in contravention of this section shall not be recognized in any proceedings before the Labor Arbiter or the Commission.
d) Appearances may be made orally or in writing. In both cases, the complete name and office address of both parties shall be made on record and the adverse party or his counsel or representative properly notified.
e) Any change in the address of counsel or representative should be filed with the records of the case and furnished the adverse party or counsel.
f) Any change or withdrawal of counsel or representative shall be made in accordance with the Rules of Court.

SECTION 9. AUTHORITY TO BIND PARTY. - Attorneys and other representatives of parties shall have authority to bind their clients in all matters of procedure; but they cannot, without a special power of attorney or express consent, enter into a compromise agreement with the opposing party in full or partial discharge of a client's claim.

RULE IV

VENUE, ASSIGNMENT AND DISPOSITION OF CASES

SECTION 1. VENUE. -

a) All cases which Labor Arbiters have authority to hear and decide may be filed in the Regional Arbitration Branch having jurisdiction over the workplace of the complainant or petitioner.
For purposes of venue, the workplace shall be understood as the place or locality where the employee is regularly assigned at the time the cause of action arose. It shall include the place where the employee is supposed to report back after a temporary detail, assignment, or travel. In case of field employees, as well as ambulant or itinerant workers, their workplace is where they are regularly assigned, or where they are supposed to regularly receive their salaries and wages or work instructions from, and report the results of their assignment to, their employers.
b) Where two (2) or more Regional Arbitration Branches have jurisdiction over the workplace of the complainant or petitioner, the Branch that first acquired jurisdiction over the case shall exclude the others.
c) When venue is not objected to before the filling of position papers such issue shall be deemed waived.
d) The venue of an action may be changed or transferred to a different Regional Arbitration Branch other than where the complaint was filed by written agreement of the parties or when the Commission or Labor Arbiter before whom the case is pending so orders, upon motion by the proper party in meritorious cases.
e) Cases involving overseas Filipino workers may be filed before the Regional Arbitration Branch having jurisdiction over the place where the complainant resides or where the principal office of any of the respondents is situated, at the option of the complainant.

SECTION 2. RAFFLE AND ASSIGNMENT OF CASES. -

a) All complaints and petitions filed with the docket unit of the Regional Arbitration Branch shall be immediately raffled and assigned to a Labor Arbiter from receipt thereof.
b) The Executive Labor Arbiter shall be responsible for the immediate raffle and assignment of all complaints and petitions filed with his Regional Arbitration Branch, and the immediate forwarding of all subsequent pleadings and motions.
c) All pleadings and motions subsequent to the filing of the complaint shall be forwarded to the Labor Arbiter before whom the case is pending within twenty-four (24) hours from receipt thereof.

SECTION 3. CONSOLIDATION OF CASES AND COMPLAINTS. - Where there are two or more cases or complaints pending before different Labor Arbiters in the same Regional Arbitration Branch involving the same employer and common principal causes of action, or the same parties with different causes of action, the subsequent cases or complaints shall be consolidated with the first to avoid unnecessary costs or delay. Such consolidated cases or complaints shall be disposed of by the Labor Arbiter to whom the first case was assigned.

In case of objection to the consolidation, the same shall be resolved by the Executive Labor Arbiter. An order resolving a motion or objection to consolidation shall be inappealable.

SECTION 4. DISPOSITION OF CASES. - Subject to the provisions of Article 263 (g) of the Labor Code, as amended, when a case is assigned to a Labor Arbiter, the entire case and any or all incidents thereto shall be considered assigned to him; and the same shall be disposed of in the same proceedings to avoid multiplicity of suits or proceedings.

When the Secretary of Labor and Employment has assumed jurisdiction over a strike or lockout or certified the same to the Commission, the parties to such dispute shall immediately inform the Secretary or the Commission, as the case may be, of all cases directly related to the dispute between them pending before any Regional Arbitration Branch, and the Labor Arbiters handling the same of such assumption or certification. The Labor Arbiter concerned shall forward within two (2) days from notice the entire records of the case to the Commission or to the Secretary of Labor, as the case may be, for proper disposition.

RULE V

PROCEEDINGS BEFORE LABOR ARBITERS

SECTION 1. JURISDICTION OF LABOR ARBITERS. - Labor Arbiters shall have original and exclusive jurisdiction to hear and decide the following cases involving all workers, whether agricultural or non-agricultural:

a) Unfair labor practice cases;
b) Termination disputes;
c) If accompanied with a claim for reinstatement, those cases that workers may file involving wages, rates of pay, hours of work and other terms and conditions of employment;
d) Claims for actual, moral, exemplary and other forms of damages arising from employer-employee relations;
e) Cases arising from any violation of Article 264 of the Labor Code, as amended, including questions involving the legality of strikes and lockouts;
f) Except claims for employees compensation not included in the next succeeding paragraph, social security, medicare, and maternity benefits, all other claims arising from employer-employee relations, including those of persons in domestic or household service, involving an amount exceeding Five Thousand Pesos (P5,000.00), whether or not accompanied with a claim for reinstatement;
g) Money claims arising out of employer-employee relationship or by virtue of any law or contract, involving Filipino workers for overseas deployment, including claims for actual, moral, exemplary and other forms of damages;
h) Wage distortion disputes in unorganized establishments not voluntarily settled by the parties pursuant to Republic Act No. 6727;
i) Enforcement of compromise agreements when there is non-compliance by any of the parties pursuant to Article 227 of the Labor Code, as amended; and
j) Other cases as may be provided by law.

Cases arising from the interpretation or implementation of collective bargaining agreements and those arising from the interpretation or enforcement of company personnel policies shall be disposed of by the Labor Arbiter by referring the same to the grievance machinery and voluntary arbitration, as may be provided in said agreements.

SECTION 2. NATURE OF PROCEEDINGS. - The proceedings before the Labor Arbiter shall be non-litigious in nature. Subject to the requirements of due process, the technicalities of law and procedure and the rules obtaining in the courts of law shall not strictly apply thereto. The Labor Arbiter may avail himself of all reasonable means to ascertain the facts of the controversy speedily, including ocular inspection and examination of well-informed persons.

SECTION 3. MANDATORY CONCILIATION AND MEDIATION CONFERENCE. -

a) The mandatory conciliation and mediation conference shall be called for the purpose of (1) amicably settling the case upon a fair compromise; (2) determining the real parties in interest; (3) determining the necessity of amending the complaint and including all causes of action; (4) defining and simplifying the issues in the case; (5) entering into admissions or stipulations of facts; and (6) threshing out all other preliminary matters. The Labor Arbiter shall preside and take full control of the proceedings.
b) Conciliation and mediation efforts shall be exerted by the Labor Arbiters all throughout the proceedings. Should the parties arrive at any agreement as to the whole or any part of the dispute, the same shall be reduced to writing and signed by the parties and their respective counsel or authorized representative, if any, before the Labor Arbiter.
c) In any case, the compromise agreement shall be approved by the Labor Arbiter, if after explaining to the parties, particularly to the complainants, the terms, conditions and consequences thereof, he is satisfied that they understand the agreement, that the same was entered into freely and voluntarily by them, and that it is not contrary to law, morals, and public policy.
d) A compromise agreement duly entered into in accordance with this Section shall be final and binding upon the parties and shall have the force and effect of a judgment rendered by the Labor Arbiter.
e) The mandatory conciliation and mediation conference shall, except for justifiable grounds, be terminated within thirty (30) calendar days from the date of the first conference.
f) No motion for postponement shall be entertained except on meritorious grounds.

SECTION 4. EFFECT OF FAILURE OF CONCILIATION AND MEDIATION. - Should the parties fail to agree upon an amicable settlement, either in whole or in part, during the mandatory conciliation and mediation conference, the Labor Arbiter shall terminate the conciliation and mediation stage and proceed to pursue the other purposes of the said conference as enumerated in the immediately preceding section. Thereafter, the Labor Arbiter shall direct the parties to simultaneously file their respective position papers on the issues agreed upon by the parties and as reflected in the minutes of the proceedings.

SECTION 5. NON-APPEARANCE OF PARTIES. - The non-appearance of the complainant or petitioner during the two (2) settings for mandatory conciliation and mediation conference scheduled in the summons, despite due notice thereof, shall be a ground for the dismissal of the case without prejudice.

In case of non-appearance by the respondent during the first scheduled conference, the second conference shall proceed as scheduled in the summons. If the respondent still fails to appear at the second conference despite being duly served with summons, the Labor Arbiter shall immediately terminate the mandatory conciliation and mediation conference. The Labor Arbiter shall thereafter allow the complainant or petitioner to file his verified position paper and submit evidence in support of his causes of action, and thereupon render his decision on the basis of the evidence on record.

SECTION 6. MOTION TO DISMISS. - On or before the date set for the mandatory conciliation and mediation conference, the respondent may file a motion to dismiss. Any motion to dismiss on the ground of lack of jurisdiction, improper venue, or that the cause of action is barred by prior judgment, prescription, or forum shopping, shall be immediately resolved by the Labor Arbiter through a written order. An order denying the motion to dismiss, or suspending its resolution until the final determination of the case, is not appealable.

SECTION 7. SUBMISSION OF POSITION PAPER AND REPLY. -

a) Subject to Sections 4 and 5 of this Rule, the Labor Arbiter shall direct the parties to submit simultaneously their verified position papers with supporting documents and affidavits, if any, within an inextendible period of ten (10) calendar days from the date of termination of the mandatory conciliation and mediation conference.
b) The position papers of the parties shall cover only those claims and causes of action raised in the complaint or amended complaint, excluding those that may have been amicably settled, and accompanied by all supporting documents, including the affidavits of witnesses, which shall take the place of their direct testimony.
c) A reply may be filed by any party within ten (10) calendar days from receipt of the position paper of the adverse party.
d) In their position papers and replies, the parties shall not be allowed to allege facts, or present evidence to prove facts and any cause or causes of action not referred to or included in the original or amended complaint or petition

SECTION 8. DETERMINATION OF NECESSITY OF HEARING OR CLARIFICATORY CONFERENCE. - Immediately after the submission by the parties of their position paper or reply, as the case may be, the Labor Arbiter shall, *motu proprio*, determine whether there is a need for a hearing or clarificatory conference. At this stage, he may, at his discretion and for the purpose of making such determination, ask clarificatory questions to further elicit facts or information, including but not limited to the subpoena of relevant documentary evidence, if any, from any party or witness

SECTION 9. ROLE OF THE LABOR ARBITER IN HEARING AND CLARIFICATORY CONFERENCE. -

a) The Labor Arbiter shall take full control and personally conduct the hearing or clarificatory conference. Unless otherwise provided by law, the Labor Arbiter shall determine the order of presentation of evidence by the parties, subject to the requirements of due process. He shall examine the parties and their witnesses with respect to the matters at issue; and ask questions only for the purpose of clarifying points of law or fact involved in the case. He shall limit the presentation of evidence to matters relevant to the issue before him and necessary for a just and speedy disposition of the case.
b) In the cross-examination of witnesses, only relevant, pertinent and material questions necessary to enlighten the Labor Arbiter shall be allowed.
c) The Labor Arbiter shall make a written summary of the proceedings, including the substance of the evidence presented, in consultation with the parties. The written summary shall be signed by the parties and shall form part of the records.

SECTION 10. NON-APPEARANCE OF PARTIES, AND POSTPONEMENT OF HEARINGS CLARIFICATORY CONFERENCES. -

a) Non-appearance at a hearing or clarificatory conference by the complainant or petitioner, who was duly notified thereof, may be sufficient cause to dismiss the case without prejudice. Subject to Section 16 of this Rule, where proper justification is shown by proper motion to warrant the re-opening of the case, the Labor Arbiter shall call another hearing or clarificatory conference and continue the proceedings until the case is finally decided. The dismissal of the case for the second time due to the unjustified non-appearance of the complainant or petitioner, who was duly notified of the clarificatory hearing, shall be with prejudice.
b) In case the respondent fails to appear during the hearing or clarificatory conference despite due notice thereof, the complainant shall be allowed to present evidence *ex-parte*, without prejudice to cross-examination at the next hearing or conference. Two (2) successive non-appearances by the respondent during his scheduled presentation of evidence or opportunity to cross-examine witnesses, despite due notice thereof, shall be construed as a waiver on his part to present evidence or conduct cross-examination.
c) The parties and their counsels appearing before the Labor Arbiter shall be prepared for continuous hearing or clarificatory conference. No postponement or continuance shall be allowed by the Labor Arbiter, except upon meritorious grounds and subject always to the requirement of expeditious disposition of cases. In any case, the hearing or clarificatory conference shall be terminated within ninety (90) calendar days from the date of the initial hearing or conference.
d) Paragraph (c) of this Section notwithstanding, in cases involving overseas Filipino workers, the aggregate period for conducting the mandatory conciliation and mediation conference, including hearing on the merits or clarificatory conference, shall not exceed sixty (60) days, which shall be reckoned from the date of acquisition of jurisdiction by the Labor Arbiter over the person of the respondents.

SECTION 11. SUBMISSION OF THE CASE FOR DECISION. - Upon the submission by the parties of their position papers or replies, or the lapse of the period to submit the same, the case shall be deemed submitted for decision unless the Labor Arbiter calls for a hearing or clarificatory conference in accordance with Section 8 of this Rule, in which case, notice of hearing or clarificatory conference shall be immediately sent to the parties. Upon termination of the said hearing or conference, the case shall be deemed submitted for decision.

SECTION 12. INHIBITION. - A Labor Arbiter may voluntarily inhibit himself from the resolution of a case and shall so state in writing the legal justifications therefor. Upon motion of a party, either on the ground of relationship within the fourth civil degree of consanguinity or affinity with the adverse party or counsel, or on question of impartiality, the Labor Arbiter may inhibit himself from further hearing and deciding the case. Such motion shall be resolved within five (5) days from the filing thereof. An order denying or granting a motion for inhibition is inappealable.

SECTION 13. PERIOD TO DECIDE CASE. - The Labor Arbiter shall render his decision within thirty (30) calendar days, without extension, after the submission of the case by the parties for decision, even in the absence of stenographic notes; Provided however, that cases involving overseas Filipino workers shall be decided within ninety (90) calendar days after the filing of the complaint which shall commence to run upon acquisition by the Labor Arbiter of jurisdiction over the respondents.

SECTION 14. CONTENTS OF DECISIONS. - The decisions and orders of the Labor Arbiter shall be clear and concise and shall include a brief statement of the: a) facts of the case; b) issues involved; c) applicable laws or rules; d) conclusions and the reasons therefor; and e) specific remedy or relief granted. In cases involving monetary awards, the decisions or orders of the Labor Arbiter shall contain the amount awarded.

In case the decision of the Labor Arbiter includes an order of reinstatement, it shall likewise contain: a) a statement that the reinstatement aspect is immediately executory; and b) a directive for the employer to submit a report of compliance within ten (10) calendar days from receipt of the said decision.

SECTION 15. MOTIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION AND PETITIONS FOR RELIEF FROM JUDGMENT. - No motions for reconsideration or petitions for relief from judgment of any decision, resolution or order of a Labor Arbiter shall be allowed. However, when one such motion for reconsideration is filed, it shall be treated as an appeal provided that it complies with the requirements for perfecting an appeal. In the case of a petition for relief from judgment, the Labor Arbiter shall elevate the case to the Commission for disposition.

SECTION 16. REVIVAL AND RE-OPENING OR RE-FILING OF DISMISSED CASE. - A party may file a motion to revive or re-open a case dismissed without prejudice, within ten (10) calendar days from receipt of notice of the order dismissing the same; otherwise, his only remedy shall be to re-file the case in the arbitration branch of origin.

RULE VI

APPEALS

SECTION 1. PERIODS OF APPEAL. - Decisions, resolutions or orders of the Labor Arbiter shall be final and executory unless appealed to the Commission by any or both parties within ten (10) calendar days from receipt thereof; and in case of decisions, resolutions or orders of the Regional Director of the Department of Labor and Employment pursuant to Article 129 of the Labor Code, within five (5) calendar days from receipt thereof. If the 10th or 5th day, as the case may be, falls on a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, the last day to perfect the appeal shall be the first working day following such Saturday, Sunday or holiday.

No motion or request for extension of the period within which to perfect an appeal shall be allowed.

SECTION 2. GROUNDS. - The appeal may be entertained only on any of the following grounds:

a) If there is prima facie evidence of abuse of discretion on the part of the Labor Arbiter or Regional Director;
b) If the decision, resolution or order was secured through fraud or coercion, including graft and corruption;
c) If made purely on questions of law; and/or
d) If serious errors in the findings of facts are raised which, if not corrected, would cause grave or irreparable damage or injury to the appellant.

SECTION 3. WHERE FILED. - The appeal shall be filed with the Regional Arbitration Branch or Regional Office where the case was heard and decided.

SECTION 4. REQUISITES FOR PERFECTION OF APPEAL. -

a) The appeal shall be: 1) filed within the reglementary period provided in Section 1 of this Rule; 2) verified by the appellant himself in accordance with Section 4, Rule 7 of the Rules of Court, as amended; 3) in the form of a memorandum of appeal which shall state the grounds relied upon and the arguments in support thereof, the relief prayed for, and with a statement of the date the appellant received the appealed decision, resolution or order; 4) in three (3) legibly typewritten or printed copies; and 5) accompanied by i) proof of payment of the required appeal fee; ii) posting of a cash or surety bond as provided in Section 6 of this Rule; iii) a certificate of non-forum shopping; and iv) proof of service upon the other parties.
b) A mere notice of appeal without complying with the other requisites aforestated shall not stop the running of the period for perfecting an appeal.
c) The appellee may file with the Regional Arbitration Branch or Regional Office where the appeal was filed, his answer or reply to appellant's memorandum of appeal, not later than ten (10) calendar days from receipt thereof. Failure on the part of the appellee who was properly furnished with a copy of the appeal to file his answer or reply within the said period may be construed as a waiver on his part to file the same.
d) Subject to the provisions of Article 218 of the Labor Code, once the appeal is perfected in accordance with these Rules, the Commission shall limit itself to reviewing and deciding only the specific issues that were elevated on appeal.

SECTION 5. APPEAL FEE. - The appellant shall pay an appeal fee of One Hundred Fifty Pesos (P150.00) to the Regional Arbitration Branch or Regional Office of origin, and the official receipt of such payment shall form part of the records of the case.

SECTION 6. BOND. - In case the decision of the Labor Arbiter or the Regional Director involves a monetary award, an appeal by the employer may be perfected only upon the posting of a bond, which shall either be in the form of cash deposit or surety bond equivalent in amount to the monetary award, exclusive of damages and attorney's fees.

In case of surety bond, the same shall be issued by a reputable bonding company duly accredited by the Commission or the Supreme Court, and shall be accompanied by original or certified true copies of the following:

a) a joint declaration under oath by the employer, his counsel, and the bonding company, attesting that the bond posted is genuine, and shall be in effect until final disposition of the case.
b) an indemnity agreement between the employer-appellant and bonding company;
c) proof of security deposit or collateral securing the bond: provided, that a check shall not be considered as an acceptable security;
d) a certificate of authority from the Insurance Commission;
e) certificate of registration from the Securities and Exchange Commission;
f) certificate of authority to transact surety business from the Office of the President;
g) certificate of accreditation and authority from the Supreme Court; and
h) notarized board resolution or secretary's certificate from the bonding company showing its authorized signatories and their specimen signatures.

A cash or surety bond shall be valid and effective from the date of deposit or posting, until the case is finally decided, resolved or terminated, or the award satisfied. This condition shall be deemed incorporated in the terms and conditions of the surety bond, and shall be binding on the appellants and the bonding company.

The appellant shall furnish the appellee with a certified true copy of the said surety bond with all the above-mentioned supporting documents. The appellee shall verify the regularity and genuineness thereof and immediately report any irregularity to the Commission.

Upon verification by the Commission that the bond is irregular or not genuine, the Commission shall cause the immediate dismissal of the appeal, and censure or cite in contempt the responsible parties and their counsels, or subject them to reasonable fine or penalty.

No motion to reduce bond shall be entertained except on meritorious grounds, and only upon the posting of a bond in a reasonable amount in relation to the monetary award.

The mere filing of a motion to reduce bond without complying with the requisites in the preceding paragraphs shall not stop the running of the period to perfect an appeal.

SECTION 7. RECORDS OF CASE ON APPEAL. - The records of a case shall have a corresponding index of its contents which shall include the following: a) the original copy of the complaint; b) other pleadings and motions; c) minutes of the proceedings, notices, transcripts of stenographic notes, if any; d) decisions, orders, and resolutions as well as proof of service thereof, if available; e) the computation of the award; f) memorandum of appeal and the reply or answer thereto, if any, and proof of service, if available; g) official receipt of the appeal fee; and h) the appeal bond, if any.

The records shall be chronologically arranged and paged prominently.

SECTION 8. TRANSMITTAL OF RECORDS OF CASE ON APPEAL. - Within forty-eight (48) hours after the filing of the appeal, the records of the case shall be transmitted by the Regional Arbitration Branch or office of origin to the Commission.

SECTION 9. PERFECTION OF APPEAL; EFFECT. - Without prejudice to immediate reinstatement pending appeal under Section 6 of Rule XI, once an appeal is filed, the Labor Arbiter loses jurisdiction over the case. All pleadings and motions pertaining to the appealed case shall thereafter be addressed to and filed with the Commission

SECTION 10. FRIVOLOUS OR DILATORY APPEALS. - No appeal from an interlocutory order shall be entertained. To discourage frivolous or dilatory appeals, including those taken from interlocutory orders, the Commission may censure or cite in contempt the erring parties and their counsels, or subject them to reasonable fine or penalty.

SECTION 11. APPEALS FROM DECISION OF OTHER AGENCIES. - The Rules provided herein governing appeals from the decisions or orders of Labor Arbiters shall apply to appeals to the Commission from decisions or orders of the other offices or agencies appealable to the Commission according to law.

RULE VII

PROCEEDINGS BEFORE THE COMMISSION

SECTION 1. JURISDICTION OF THE COMMISSION - The Commission shall exercise exclusive, original, and appellate jurisdiction in accordance with law.

SECTION 2. COMPOSITION AND INTERNAL FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION *EN BANC* AND ITS DIVISIONS. -

a) Composition - Unless otherwise provided by law, the Commission shall be composed of the Chairman and of fourteen (14) Commissioners.
b) Commission *En Banc*. - The Commission shall sit *en banc* only for purposes of promulgating rules and regulations governing the hearing and disposition of cases before its Divisions and Regional Arbitration Branches, and for the formulation of policies affecting its administration and operations. It may, on temporary or emergency basis, allow cases within the jurisdiction of any Division to be heard by any other Division whose docket allows the additional workload and such transfer will not expose litigants to unnecessary additional expense.
c) Divisions. - Unless otherwise provided by law, the Commission shall exercise its adjudicatory and all other powers, functions and duties through its five (5) Divisions. Each Division shall consist of one member from the public sector who shall act as the Presiding Commissioner and one member each from the workers and employers sectors, respectively.

Of the five (5) Divisions, the First, Second and Third Divisions shall have exclusive territorial jurisdiction over appealed cases coming from Luzon; Fourth Division, appealed cases from Visayas Region; and the Fifth Division, appealed cases from Mindanao including those from the Autonomous Region for Muslim Mindanao.

d) Headquarters. - As provided by law, the Commission and its First, Second and Third Divisions shall have their main office in the National Capital Region, and the Fourth and Fifth Divisions in the cities of Cebu and Cagayan de Oro, respectively.

SECTION 3. THE CHAIRMAN. - The Chairman shall preside over all sessions of the Commission *en banc*. He is the Presiding Commissioner of the First Division. In case of the effective absence or incapacity of the Chairman, the Presiding Commissioner of the Second Division shall be the Acting Chairman.

The Chairman, aided by the Executive Clerk of the Commission, shall have administrative supervision over the Commission and its Regional Arbitration Branches and all its personnel including the Executive Labor Arbiters and Labor Arbiters.

SECTION 4. COMMISSION *EN BANC* SESSION, QUORUM AND VOTE. -

a) Commission *En Banc*. - The Chairman shall call the Commission to an *en banc* session at least twice a year, preferably on the first week of June and the first week of December, to deliberate and decide on any matter before it. However, a majority of all the members of the Commission may call a special *en banc* session to discuss and decide on urgent and vital matters which need immediate action.

b) Quorum. - The presence of a majority of all the members of the Commission shall be necessary to constitute a quorum. The vote or concurrence of the majority of the members constituting a quorum shall be the decision or resolution of the Commission *en banc*.

c) Division. - The presence of at least two (2) Commissioners of a Division shall constitute a quorum. The concurrence of two (2) Commissioners of a Division shall be necessary for the pronouncement of a judgment or resolution.

Whenever the required membership in a Division is not complete and the concurrence of two (2) Commissioners to arrive at a judgment or resolution cannot be obtained, the Chairman shall designate such number of additional Commissioners from the other Divisions as may be necessary from the same sector.

d) Role of Chairman in the Division. - The Chairman of the Commission may convene and preside over the session of any Division to consider any case pending before it and participate in its deliberations, if in his judgment, his presence therein will best serve the interests of labor justice. He shall not however, participate in the voting by the Division, except when he is acting as Presiding Commissioner of the Division in the absence of the regular Presiding Commissioner.

SECTION 5. CONSULTATION. - The conclusions of a Division on any case or matter submitted to it for decision shall be reached in consultation before the case is assigned to a member for the writing of the opinion. It shall be mandatory for the Division to meet for the purpose of the consultation ordained herein.

A certification to this effect signed by the Presiding Commissioner of the Division shall be issued and a copy thereof attached to the record of the case and served upon the parties.

SECTION 6. DISSENTING OPINION. - Should any member of a Division indicate his intention to write a dissenting opinion, he may file the same within the period prescribed for deciding or resolving the appeal; otherwise, such written dissenting opinion shall not be considered part of the records of the case.

SECTION 7. INHIBITION. - No motion to inhibit the entire Division of the Commission shall be entertained. However, any Commissioner may inhibit himself from the consideration and resolution of any case or matter before the Division and shall so state in writing the legal or justifiable grounds therefor. In the event that a member inhibits himself, the case shall be raffled by the Executive Clerk or Deputy Executive Clerk to either of the two (2) remaining Commissioners. In case two (2) Commissioners in a Division inhibit themselves in a case or matter before it, the Chairman shall, as far as practicable, appoint two (2) Commissioners from other Divisions representing the sector of the Commissioners who inhibited themselves.

SECTION 8. ABSTENTION. - In the event of an abstention, and the concurrence of two (2) Commissioners to arrive at a judgment or resolution cannot be obtained, Section 4 (c), second paragraph, of this Rule shall apply.

SECTION 9. CONSOLIDATION OF CASES. - Appealed and injunction cases involving the same parties, issues, or related questions of fact or law shall be consolidated before the Commissioner to whom the case with the lowest case number is assigned. Notice of the consolidation shall be given by the Executive Clerk or Deputy Executive Clerk to the other members of the concerned Divisions.

SECTION 10. TECHNICAL RULES NOT BINDING. - The rules of procedure and evidence prevailing in courts of law and equity shall not be controlling and the Commission shall use every and all reasonable means to ascertain the facts in each case speedily and objectively, without regard to technicalities of law or procedure, all in the interest of due process.

In any proceeding before the Commission, the parties may be represented by legal counsel but it shall be the duty of the Chairman, any Presiding Commissioner or Commissioner to exercise complete control of the proceedings at all stages.

SECTION 11. CONCILIATION AND MEDIATION. - In the exercise of its exclusive, original and appellate jurisdiction, the Commission may exert all efforts towards the amicable settlement of a labor dispute.

The settlement of cases on appeal, to be valid and binding between the parties, shall be made before the Commissioner or his authorized representative.

SECTION 12. ROLE OF THE LABOR ARBITER ASSIGNED TO THE COMMISSION. - In the resolution of cases on appeal, and those mentioned in Rules VIII and X, the Commission shall be assisted by a Labor Arbiter who may be directed to study, review, hear and receive evidence, and submit reports thereon.

SECTION 13. FORM OF DECISION, RESOLUTION AND ORDER. - The decision, resolution and order of the Commission shall state clearly and distinctly the findings of facts, issues, and conclusions of law on which it is based, and the relief granted, if any. If the decision, resolution or order involves monetary awards, the same shall contain the specific amount awarded as of the date the decision is rendered.

SECTION 14. FINALITY OF DECISION OF THE COMMISSION AND ENTRY OF JUDGMENT. -

a) Finality of the Decisions, Resolutions or Orders of the Commission. - Except as provided in Section 9 of Rule X, the decisions, resolutions or orders of the Commission shall become final and executory after ten (10) calendar days from receipt thereof by the parties.

b) Entry of Judgment. - Upon the expiration of the ten (10) calendar day period provided in paragraph (a) of this Section, the decision, resolution, or order shall be entered in a book of entries of judgment.

The Executive Clerk or Deputy Executive Clerk shall consider the decision, resolution or order as final and executory after sixty (60) calendar days from date of mailing in the absence of return cards, certifications from the post office, or other proof of service to parties.

SECTION 15. MOTIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION. - Motion for reconsideration of any decision, resolution or order of the Commission shall not be entertained except when based on palpable or patent errors; provided that the motion is under oath and filed within ten (10) calendar days from receipt of decision, resolution or order, with proof of service that a copy of the same has been furnished, within the reglementary period, the adverse party; and provided further, that only one such motion from the same party shall be entertained.

Should a motion for reconsideration be entertained pursuant to this Section, the resolution shall be executory after ten (10) calendar days from receipt thereof.

RULE VIII

CERTIFIED CASES

SECTION 1. POLICY. - It is the declared policy of certification of labor disputes for compulsory arbitration to ensure and maintain industrial peace based on social justice and national interest by having a full, complete and immediate settlement or adjudication of all labor disputes between the parties, as well as issues that are relevant to or incidents of the certified issues.

SECTION 2. CERTIFIED LABOR DISPUTES. - Certified labor disputes are cases certified to the Commission for compulsory arbitration under Article 263 (g) of the Labor Code.

SECTION 3. EFFECTS OF CERTIFICATION. -

a) Upon certification, the intended or impending strike or lockout is automatically enjoined, notwithstanding the filing of any motion for reconsideration of the certification order nor the non-resolution of any such motion which may have been duly submitted to the Office of the Secretary of Labor and Employment. If a work stoppage has already taken place at the time of the certification, all striking or locked out employees shall immediately return to work and the employer shall immediately resume operations and readmit all workers under the same terms and conditions prevailing before the strike or lockout.

b) All cases between the same parties, except where the certification order specifies otherwise the issues submitted for arbitration which are already filed or may be filed, and are relevant to or are proper incidents of the certified case, shall be considered subsumed or absorbed by the certified case, and shall be decided by the appropriate Division of the Commission.

Subject to the second paragraph of Section 4 of Rule IV, the parties to a certified case, under pain of contempt, shall inform their counsels and the Division concerned of all cases pending with the Regional Arbitration Branches and the Voluntary Arbitrators relative or incident to the certified case before it.

c) Whenever a certified labor dispute involves a business entity with several workplaces located in different regions, the Division having territorial jurisdiction over the principal office of the company shall acquire jurisdiction to decide such labor dispute; unless the certification order provides otherwise.

SECTION 4. EFFECTS OF DEFIANCE. - Non-compliance with the certification order of the Secretary of Labor and Employment shall be considered as an illegal act committed in the course of the strike or lockout, and shall authorize the Commission to enforce the same under pain of immediate disciplinary action, including dismissal or loss of employment status or payment by the locking-out employer of backwages, damages and/or other affirmative relief, even criminal prosecution against the liable parties.

The Commission may also seek the assistance of law enforcement agencies to ensure compliance and enforcement of its orders and resolutions

SECTION 5. PROCEDURE IN CERTIFIED CASES. -

a) Unless there is a necessity to conduct a clarificatory hearing, the Commission shall resolve all certified cases within thirty (30) calendar days from receipt by the assigned Commissioner of the complete records, which shall include the position papers of the parties and the order of the Secretary of Labor and Employment denying the motion for reconsideration of the certification order, if such motion has been filed.

b) Where a clarificatory hearing is needed, the Commission shall, within five (5) calendar days from receipt of the records, issue a notice to be served on the parties through the fastest means available, requiring them to appear and submit additional evidence, if any.

c) Notwithstanding the necessity for a clarificatory hearing, all certified cases shall be resolved by the Commission within sixty (60) calendar days from receipt of the complete records.

d) No motion for postponement or extension shall be entertained.

SECTION 6. EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT IN CERTIFIED CASE. – Upon issuance of the entry of judgment, the Commission, *motu proprio* or upon motion by the proper party, may cause the execution of the judgment in the certified case.

RULE IX

CONTEMPT

SECTION 1. DIRECT CONTEMPT. - The Chairman or any Commissioner or Labor Arbiter may summarily adjudge guilty of direct contempt any person committing any act of misbehavior in the presence of or so near the Chairman or any Commissioner or Labor Arbiter as to obstruct or interrupt the proceedings before the same, including disrespect toward said officials, offensive acts toward others, or refusal to be sworn or to answer as a witness or to subscribe to an affidavit or deposition when lawfully required to do so. If the offense is committed against the Commission or any member thereof, the same shall be punished by a fine not exceeding Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00) or imprisonment not exceeding five (5) days, or both; and, if the offense is committed against any Labor Arbiter, the same shall be punished by a fine not exceeding One Hundred Pesos (P100.00) or imprisonment not exceeding one (1) day, or both.

Any person adjudged guilty of direct contempt by a Labor Arbiter may, within a period of five (5) calendar days from notice of the judgment, appeal the same to the Commission and the execution of said judgment shall be suspended pending resolution of the appeal upon the filing by said person of a bond on condition that he will abide by and perform the judgment should the appeal be decided against him. A judgment of the Commission on direct contempt shall be immediately executory and inappealable.

SECTION 2. INDIRECT CONTEMPT. - The Commission or any Labor Arbiter may, in accordance with Rule 71 of the Rules of Court, cite any person for indirect contempt and impose the appropriate penalty under any of the following grounds:

a) Misbehavior of any officer or employee in the performance of his official duties or in his official transaction;

b) Disobedience of, or resistance to, a lawful writ, order or decision;

c) Any abuse of, or any unlawful interference with the processes or proceedings not constituting direct contempt;

d) Any improper conduct tending, directly or indirectly, to impede, obstruct or degrade the administration of justice;

e) Assuming to be an attorney or a representative of party without authority;

f) Failure to obey a subpoena duly served; or

g) Other grounds analogous to the foregoing.

The same procedure provided in the second paragraph of Section 1 of this Rule shall govern any person adjudged guilty of indirect contempt.

RULE X

INJUNCTION

SECTION 1. INJUNCTION IN ORDINARY LABOR DISPUTES. - A preliminary injunction or restraining order may be granted by the Commission through its Divisions pursuant to the provisions of paragraph (e) of Article 218 of the Labor Code, as amended, when it is established on the basis of the sworn allegations in the petition that the acts complained of involving or arising from any labor dispute before the Commission, which, if not restrained or performed forthwith, may cause grave or irreparable damage to any party or render ineffectual any decision in favor of such party.

A certification of non-forum shopping shall accompany the petition for injunction.

The writ of preliminary injunction or temporary restraining order shall become effective only upon posting of the required cash bond in the amount to be determined by the Commission to answer for any damage that may be suffered by the party enjoined, if it is finally determined that the petitioner is not entitled thereto.

SECTION 2. INJUNCTION IN STRIKES OR LOCKOUTS. - A preliminary or permanent injunction may be granted by the Commission only after hearing the testimony of witnesses and with opportunity for cross-examination in support of the allegations of the complaint or petition made under oath, and testimony by way of opposition thereto, if offered, and only after a finding of fact by the Commission:

a) That prohibited or unlawful acts have been threatened and will be committed and will be continued unless restrained, but no injunction or temporary restraining order shall be issued on account of any threat, prohibited or unlawful act, except against the person or persons, association or organization making the threat or committing the prohibited or unlawful act or actually authorizing or ratifying the same after actual knowledge thereof.

b) That substantial and irreparable injury to petitioner's property will follow;

c) That as to each item of relief to be granted, greater injury will be inflicted upon the petitioner by the denial of relief than will be inflicted upon respondents by the granting of relief;

d) That petitioner has no adequate remedy at law; and

e) That the public officers charged with the duty to protect petitioner's property are unable or unwilling to furnish adequate protection.

SECTION 3. HEARING; NOTICE THEREOF. - Hearings shall be held after due and personal notice thereof has been served, in such manner as the Commission shall direct, to all known persons against whom relief is sought, and also to the Chief Executive and other public officials of the province or city within which the unlawful acts have been threatened or committed charged with the duty to protect petitioner's property.

SECTION 4. RECEPTION OF EVIDENCE; DELEGATION. - The reception of evidence for the application of a writ of injunction may be delegated by the Commission to any of its Labor Arbiters who shall conduct such hearings in such places as he may determine to be accessible to the parties and their witnesses, and shall thereafter submit his report and recommendation to the Commission within fifteen (15) days from such delegation.

SECTION 5. OCULAR INSPECTION. - The Chairman, any Commissioner, Labor Arbiter or their duly authorized representatives, may, at any time during working hours, conduct an ocular inspection on any establishment, building, ship or vessel, place or premises, including any work, material, implement, machinery, appliance or any object therein, and ask any employee, laborer, or any person, as the case may be, for any information or data concerning any matter or question relative to the object of the petition.

The ocular inspection reports shall be submitted to the appropriate Division within twenty-four (24) hours from the conduct thereof.

SECTION 6. TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER; REQUISITES. - If the petitioner shall also allege that, unless a temporary restraining order shall be issued without notice, a substantial and irreparable injury to petitioner's property will be unavoidable, such a temporary restraining order may be issued upon testimony under oath, or by affidavits of the petitioner's witnesses, sufficient, if sustained, to justify the Commission in the issuance thereof.

SECTION 7. CASH BOND. - No temporary restraining order or writ of preliminary injunction shall be issued except on the condition that petitioner shall first file an undertaking to answer for the damages and post a cash bond in the amount of Fifty Thousand Pesos (P50,000.00), or such higher amount as may be determined by the Commission, to recompense those enjoined for any loss, expense or damage caused by the improvident or erroneous issuance of such order or injunction, including all reasonable costs, together with a reasonable attorney's fee, and expense of defense against the order or against the granting of any injunctive relief sought in the same proceeding and subsequently denied by the Commission.

SECTION 8. EFFECTIVITY OF TEMPORARY RESTRAINING ORDER. - A temporary restraining order shall be effective for no longer than twenty (20) days reckoned from the posting of the cash bond required under the preceding Section. During the said period, the parties shall be required to present evidence to substantiate their respective positions in the main petition.

SECTION 9. EFFECTS OF DEFIANCE. - The order or resolution enjoining the performance of illegal acts shall be immediately executory in accordance with the terms thereof. In case of non-compliance, the Commission shall impose such sanctions, and shall issue such orders, as may be necessary to implement the said order or resolution, including the enlistment of law enforcement agencies having jurisdiction over the area for the purpose of enforcing the same.

SECTION 10. ORDINARY REMEDY IN LAW OR IN EQUITY. - Nothing in this Rule shall deprive any party having a claim or cause of action under or upon such undertaking from electing to pursue his ordinary remedy by suit at law or in equity.

RULE XI

EXECUTION PROCEEDINGS

SECTION 1. EXECUTION UPON FINALITY OF DECISION OR ORDER. -

a) A writ of execution may be issued *motu propno* or on motion, upon a decision or order that finally disposes of the action or proceedings after the parties and their counsels or authorized representatives are furnished with copies of the decision or order in accordance with these Rules, but only after the expiration of the period to appeal if no appeal has been filed, as shown by the certificate of finality. If an appeal has been filed, a writ of execution may be issued when there is an entry of judgment as provided for in Section 14 of Rule VII.

b) No motion for execution shall be entertained nor a writ of execution be issued unless the Labor Arbiter or the Commission is in possession of the records of the case which shall include an entry of judgment if the case was appealed; except that, as provided for in Section 14 of Rule V and Section 6 of this Rule, and in those cases where partial execution is allowed by law, the Labor Arbiter shall retain duplicate original copies of the decision to be implemented and proof of service thereof for the purpose of immediate enforcement

SECTION 2. PRE-EXECUTION CONFERENCE. - Within two (2) working days from receipt of a motion for the issuance of a writ of execution, and subject to Section 1, paragraph (b) of this Rule, the Labor Arbiter shall schedule a pre-execution conference or hearing to thresh out matters relevant to execution, including the computation of the award.

SECTION 3. FORM AND CONTENTS OF A WRIT OF EXECUTION. - The writ of execution must be issued in the name of the Republic of the Philippines signed by the Commission or Labor Arbiter requiring the Sheriff to execute the decision, order, or award of the Commission or Labor Arbiter, and must contain the dispositive portion thereof, the amount, if any, to be demanded, and all lawful fees to be collected from the losing party or any other person required by law to obey the same.

SECTION 4. COMPUTATION DURING EXECUTION. - Where further computation of the award in the decision, resolution or order is necessary during the course of the execution proceedings, no writ of execution shall be issued until after the computation has been approved by the Labor Arbiter in an order issued after the parties have been duly notified and heard on the matter.

SECTION 5. EXECUTION OF MONETARY JUDGMENT. -

a) Immediate payment on demand. - The Sheriff shall enforce a monetary judgment by demanding the immediate payment of the full amount stated in the writ of execution and all lawful fees from the losing party or any other person required by law to obey the same.

b) In the event of failure or refusal of the losing party to pay the judgment award, the Sheriff shall immediately proceed against the cash deposit or surety bond posted by the losing party, if any;

c) If the bonding company refuses to comply with the writ of execution, then its president and officers or authorized representatives shall be cited for contempt, and the bonding company shall be barred from transacting business with the Commission;

d) Should the cash deposit or surety bond be insufficient, or in case the surety bond cannot be proceeded against for any reason, the Sheriff shall, within five (5) days from demand, execute the monetary judgment by levying on the property, personal and real, of the losing party not exempt from execution, sufficient to cover the judgment award, which may be disposed of for value at a public auction to the highest bidder.

e) Proceeds of execution shall be deposited with the Cashier of the concerned Division or Regional Arbitration Branch, or with an authorized depositary bank. Where payment is made in the form of a check, the same shall be payable to the Commission.

SECTION 6. EXECUTION OF REINSTATEMENT PENDING APPEAL. - In case the decision includes an order of reinstatement, and the employer disobeys the directive under the second paragraph of Section 14 of Rule V or refuses to reinstate the dismissed employee, the Labor Arbiter shall immediately issue writ of execution, even pending appeal, directing the employer to immediately reinstate the dismissed employee either physically or in the payroll, and to pay the accrued salaries as a consequence of such reinstatement at the rate specified in the decision.

The Sheriff shall serve the writ of execution upon the employer or any other person required by law to obey the same. If he disobeys the writ, such employer or person may be cited for contempt in accordance with Rule IX.

SECTION 7. ENFORCEMENT OF WRIT OF EXECUTION. - In executing a decision, resolution or order, the Sheriff, or other authorized officer acting as Sheriff of the Commission, shall be guided strictly by these Rules, and by the Manual on Execution of Judgment, which shall form part of these Rules. In the absence of applicable rules, the Rules of Court, as amended, shall be applied in a suppletory manner

SECTION 8. EXECUTION BY MOTION OR BY INDEPENDENT ACTION. - A decision or order may be executed on motion within five (5) years from the date it becomes final and executory. After the lapse of such period, the judgment shall become dormant, and may only be enforced by an independent action within a period of ten (10) years from date of its finality

SECTION 9. EFFECT OF PERFECTION OF APPEAL ON EXECUTION. - The perfection of an appeal shall stay the execution of the decision of the Labor Arbiter on appeal, except execution for reinstatement pending appeal.

SECTION 10. EFFECT OF PETITION FOR *CERTIORARI* ON EXECUTION. - A petition for *certiorari* with the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court shall not stay the execution of the assailed decision unless a restraining order is issued by said courts.

SECTION 11. RESOLUTION OF MOTION TO QUASH. - The mere filing of a motion to quash shall not stay execution proceedings. A motion to quash shall be resolved by the Labor Arbiter within ten (10) working days from submission of said motion for resolution.

SECTION 12. THIRD PARTY CLAIM. - A third party claim shall be filed within five (5) days from the last day of posting or publication of the notice of execution sale; otherwise the claim shall be forever barred. The third party claimant shall execute an affidavit stating his title to the property or right to possession thereof with supporting evidence, and shall file the same with the Sheriff and the Commission or Labor Arbiter who issued the writ of execution. Upon receipt of the third party claim, all proceedings, with respect to the execution of the property subject of such claim, shall automatically be suspended. The Labor Arbiter who issued the writ may require the third party claimant to adduce additional evidence in support of his third party claim and to post a cash or surety bond equivalent to the amount of his claim, as provided for in Section 6 of Rule VI, without prejudice to the posting by the prevailing party of a *supersedeas* bond in an amount equivalent to that posted by the third party claimant. The Labor Arbiter shall resolve the propriety of such third party claim within ten (10) working days from submission of said claim for resolution.

SECTION 13. RETURN OF WRIT OF EXECUTION. - The writ of execution shall be returned to the Commission or Labor Arbiter who issued it at anytime, but not within ten (10) days nor beyond one hundred eighty (180) days, after receipt thereof by the Sheriff, who shall set forth in writing the whole proceedings, and file it with the Commission or Labor Arbiter to form part of the records of the case.

SECTION 14. SHERIFF'S REPORT. - The Sheriff enforcing the writ of execution shall submit not later than thirty (30) days from receipt of such writ, and every thirty (30) days thereafter, a report updating the Commission or Labor Arbiter who issued the writ of execution on the status of the enforcement thereof. A copy of the report shall be furnished the Chairman and the Executive Labor Arbiter.

SECTION 15. DESIGNATION OF SPECIAL SHERIFFS AND IMPOSITION OF FINES. - The Chairman of the Commission may designate special Sheriffs and take any measure, under existing laws, to ensure compliance with the decisions, resolutions or orders of the Commission and those of Labor Arbiters, including the imposition of administrative fine which shall not be less than Five Hundred Pesos (P500.00) nor more than Ten Thousand Pesos (P10,000.00).

Failure on the part of the Sheriff to submit the return or report required under Section 13 and 14 of this Rule within the stated period shall subject him to the above administrative fine, or suspension for fifteen (15) days without pay, or both.

RULE XII

COMMISSION SEAL AND RECORDS, AND POWERS AND DUTIES OF COMMISSION OFFICIALS

SECTION 1. SEAL OF THE COMMISSION. - The seal of the National Labor Relations Commission shall be of standard size, circular, with the inscription, running from left to right on the upper outside edge, the words "NATIONAL LABOR RELATIONS COMMISSION", and the lower outside edge, the words "REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES", with a design at the center containing the coat of arms of the Department of Labor and Employment.

SECTION 2. THE EXECUTIVE CLERK. - The Executive Clerk shall assist the Commission when sitting *en banc* and when acting through the First Division, and shall perform such similar or equivalent functions and duties as are discharged by the Clerk of Court of the Court of Appeals.

SECTION 3. DEPUTY EXECUTIVE CLERKS. - The Deputy Executive Clerks for the Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions shall assist the Commission when acting through its Division, and shall perform similar functions and duties as discharged by the Deputy Clerks of Court of the Court of Appeals, and as enumerated herein as functions of the Executive Clerk relative to their respective Divisions.

SECTION 4. DUTIES AND FUNCTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE CLERK AND DEPUTY EXECUTIVE CLERKS. -

a) Custody of Seal and Books. - He shall keep in his care and custody the Seal of the Commission, together with all the books necessary for the recording of the proceedings of the Commission, including the records, files and exhibits;

b) Filing of Pleadings. - He shall receive and file all cases and pleadings and documents indicating thereon the date and time filed. All pleadings shall be filed in three (3) legibly typewritten copies in legal size;

c) Raffle and Assignment of Cases. - He shall assign appealed cases for study or report strictly by raffle or as directed by the Chairman. In this connection, the raffle of cases for study or report must be attended by the duly designated representative of the Members of the appropriate Division;

d) Service of Processes, Orders and Decisions. - He shall serve parties and counsel processes, notices of hearings, copies of decisions, resolutions or orders issued by the Commission by mail or by personal service and immediately attach the returns thereof to the records;

e) Commission Calendar and Minutes Book. - He shall prepare the Commission or Division calendars of sessions, attend such sessions personally and immediately prepare the minutes thereof. For this purpose, he shall keep a minutes book;

f) General Docket. - The Executive Clerk shall keep a general docket for the Commission, each page of which shall be numbered and prepared for receiving all the entries in a single page, and shall enter therein all original and appealed cases before it, numbered consecutively in the order in which they were received and, under the heading of each case, the date and hour of each pleading filed, of each order, decision or resolution entered, and of each other step or action taken in the case; so that, by reference to any single page, the history of the case may be known;

g) Promulgation and Promulgation Book. - He shall promulgate decisions and final resolutions on the same date the same is filed with his office and indicate the date and time of promulgation and attest the same by his signature on the first page thereof. He shall immediately furnish the Chairman with a copy of such decision, resolution, or order with a summary of the nature thereof and the issue involved therein. He shall keep a promulgation book which indicates the date and time of promulgation, the case number, title of the case, the *ponente*, the nature of the decision or final resolution and the action taken by the Commission by quoting the dispositive portion thereof. Notices of said decisions, resolutions or orders shall be sent in sealed envelopes to parties and their counsel within forty-eight (48) hours from promulgation;

h) Entry of Judgment. - He shall keep a book of entries of judgment, decisions, resolutions and orders containing in chronological order the entries of all final decisions, resolutions and orders of the Commission;

i) Disposition and Remand of Records. - Upon entry of judgment, he shall immediately remand the records of the case to the Regional Arbitration Branch of origin, Regional Director or his duly authorized officer, as the case may be. The Records Unit shall immediately post said records without delay within two (2) working days;

j) Monthly Accomplishment Reports. - He shall submit a monthly accomplishment report of the Commission or Division not later than the 7th day of the following month;

k) Other Functions. - He shall perform other functions as directed by the Chairman or the Commission *en banc*.

SECTION 5. BOARD SECRETARIES. - The Board Secretaries of the Commission shall assist the Executive Clerk or Deputy Executive Clerks in the performance of their duties and functions relative to the Commission or their respective Divisions

SECTION 6. ISSUANCE OF CERTIFIED COPIES. - Unless otherwise restricted by Section 8 hereof, the Executive Clerk, Deputy Executive Clerks, and the authorized officers of the Regional Arbitration Branches shall prepare, for any person asking for the same, a certified copy, under the Seal of the Commission, of any paper, record, decision, resolution, order or entry by and in his office, proper to be certified, after payment of the standard fees to the Commission duly receipted for; Provided, that a pauper litigant, as defined by law, shall be exempted from paying any fee for certified copies of any document, including transcripts of stenographic notes.

SECTION 7. POWER TO ADMINISTER OATH. - The Chairman, Members of the Commission, the Executive Clerk, the Deputy Executive Clerks, the Executive Labor Arbiters, the Labor Arbiters, and other persons designated or commissioned by the Chairman of the Commission, shall have the power to administer oath on all matters or proceedings related to the performance of their duties

SECTION 8. ACCESS TO COMMISSION RECORDS. - All official records of the Commission shall be open to the public during regular office hours, except those kept by it in the nature of confidential reports, records or communications which cannot be divulged without violating private rights or prejudicing the public interest. Minutes of hearings or sessions may not be divulged until after promulgation of the decision or resolution.

RULE XIII

EFFECTIVITY

SECTION 1. EFFECTIVITY. - These Rules shall take effect fifteen (15) days after publication in two (2) newspapers of general circulation.

BENEDICTO ERNESTO R. BITONIO, JR.
Chairman

RAUL T. AQUINO
Presiding Commissioner

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APOLLO X.C.S. SANGALANG
Executive Clerk of Court IV

(PDI - Dec. 23, 2005)

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REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES
REGIONAL TRIAL COURT
NATIONAL CAPITAL JUDICIAL REGION
BRANCH 90, QUEZON CITY

IN THE MATTER OF: THE
PETITION FOR CORPORATE
REHABILITATION WITH PRAYER FOR
SUSPENSION OF PAYMENTS,

SPECIAL PROCEEDING NO. Q-05-136

RUVIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION,
Petitioner.
x--x

STAY ORDER

Before this Court is a verified Petition for corporate rehabilitation with prayer for a Stay Order filed by the above-named petitioner.

Briefly, the petitioner alleges that despite the fact that it has total assets of PhP 105,362,400.00, it has encountered cash flow problems which prevent it from paying its obligations. The proposed rehabilitation plan calls for the payment of its obligations for a term of six (6) years with a grace period of one (1) year on interest and two (2) years on principal repayment, with waiver of penalties, interest at 6% per annum, among other things, because of expected "approximate gross revenue of PhP 942,516,450.00". Consequently, the petitioner prays for the issuance of a Stay Order pending proceedings before this Court.

A careful examination of the Petition shows that the same comforms substantially with Section 2, Rule 4 of the Interim Rules of Procedure on Corporate Rehabilitation (*see also* Supreme Court Resolution en banc in A.M. No. 00-8-10-SC) This Court therefore finds the Petition to be sufficient in form and substance.

IN VIEW OF THE FOREGOING, this Court issues a Stay Order, in accordance with Section 6, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules, as follows:

1.) Appointing Mr. Osmenio R. Galapate who is a Certified Public Accountant, as rehabilitation receiver who shall be considered as an officer of the court and who shall have the powers, duties and functions as provided in Section 14, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules. The rehabilitation receiver must post a bond of PhP 150,000.00 before entering upon his powers, duties and functions and must take an oath, as provided under Section 15, Rule 4 of the aforecited Interim Rules. The petitioner is directed to serve immediately a copy of this Stay Order upon the rehabilitation reciever, Mr. Osmenio R. Galapate who shall manifest his acceptance or non-accceptance or his appointment not later than five (5) days from his receipt hereof;

2.) Staying enforcement of all claims, whether for money or otherwise and whether such enforcement is by court action or otherwise, against the petitioner, and its guarantors and sureties not solidarily liable with the petitioner including the staying of proceedings of collection cases filed against petitioner, and the staying of the enforcement/implementation of application/s for extra-judicial foreclosure sale/s and actual foreclosure sale/s, if any, against the real and personal properties of the petitioner.

3.) Prohibiting the petitioner from selling, encumbering, transferring, or disposing in any manner any of its properties except in the ordinary course of business;

4.) Prohibiting the petitioner from making any payment of its liabilities outstanding as at the date of the filing of the Petition on November 30, 2005;

5.) Prohibiting the suppliers of the petitioner from withholding supply of goods and services in the ordinary course of business for as long as the petitioner makes payments for the services and goods supplied after the issuance of this Stay Order.

6.) Directing the petitioner to pay in full all administrative expenses incurred after the issuance of this Stay Order.

The initial hearing on the Petition is set on January 13, 2006 (Friday) at 2:00 P.M. at the session room of Branch 90 of this Court located at the Ground Floor of the Hall of Justice Building, Quezon City Hall complex, Quezon City In the event the initial hearing does not push through for any reason like there is no work on said date, the hearing shall be reset automatically to January 19, 2006 (Thursday) at 2:00 P.M. All creditors and all interested parties including the Securities and Exchange Commission are directed to file with this Court and serve upon the petitioner a verified comment on or opposition to the Petition, with supporting affidavits and documents, not later than ten (10) days before the date of the initial hearing as set forth above, and they are put on notice that their failure to do so will bar them from participating in the proceedings before this Court. All creditors and all interested parties are further directed to secure from this Court copies of the Petition and its annexes within such time as to enable them to file their verified comment on or opposition thereto and to prepare them for the initial hearing and to attain this purpose, the petitioner is ordered to file with this Court initially five (5) additional copies of the Petition and its annexes within ten (10) days from receipt hereof.

The petitioner is furthermore directed by this Court to have a copy of this Order published in the business section of the Philippine Daily Inquirer and one other newspaper of general circulation in the Philippines chosen by raffle if it is a newspaper other than the herein-named newspaper considering the probable presence of numerous creditors and interested parties, once a week for two (2) consecutive weeks, with the last publication effected at least three (3) weeks prior to the date of initial hearing as set forth above, at the expense of the petitioner.

The OIC, Branch Clerk of Court, is ordered to see to it that the Process Server shall serve immediately copies of this Stay Order upon: 1) Ms. Ma. Victoria A. Reyes (the chairman and chief executive officer of the petitioner), c/o Ruvic Development Corporation, No. 11 Miller Street, San Francisco del Monte, Quezon City; 2) Atty. Manuel M. Cosico (counsel for the petitioner), 30th Floor, Citibank Tower, 8741 Paseo de Roxas, Makati City; 3) Mr. Osmenio R. Galapate (the rehabilitation receiver), 27 Allah Street, NIA Village, Barangay Pasong Tamo, Quezon City; and 4) the Honorable Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission, EDSA (Epifanio De Los Santos Avenue), Mandaluyong City.

SO ORDERED.

Quezon City, December 7, 2005.

(Sgd.) REYNALDO B. DAWAY, C.P.A.
Presiding Judge

(PDI--Dec. 23, 2005)

Philip Morris Philippines Manufacturing Inc.,
part of Philip Morris International (PMI) and the Altria Group, Inc.,
is **one of the largest tobacco companies in the world.**
PMI brands are made in more than **50 factories** around the world
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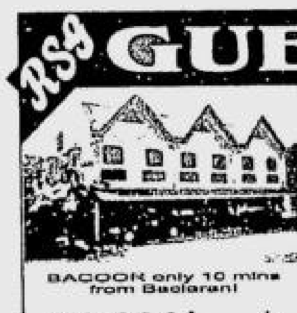

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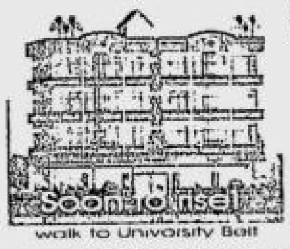

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PUBLIC NOTICES

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that the estate of the late ANGEL A. ALCAYDE JR. was extrajudicially settled among his heirs per Doc. No. 238; Page No. 49; Book No. XXXIX; Series of 2005 before Notary Public Atty. Conrado P. Sajor of Marilao Bulacan.
(PDI-Dec. 16, 23 & 30, 2005)

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PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF LOSS

Notice is hereby given that Ronjade Enterprises Provisional Receipt Nos. 0094-0095 were lost. Any transaction using these provisional receipts will not be honored by Ronjade Enterprises.

PUBLIC NOTICES

AUCTION SALE

MUNOZ-BRIONES PAWNSHOP
Auction
Jan 02 2006
All unredeemed article
from Aug 1-31, 2005
354 Roosevelt Ave QC 9AM
109 Dela Rosa Makati 10AM
VZamora-Auctioneer

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La Funeraria Paz - Sucat
Manila Memorial Park
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OBITUARIES

THE
HERITAGE PARK
FORT BONIFACIO
Funeral Home and Crematory
845-2334 to 38; 845-2440

Estelita "Telly" R. Ocampo

September 09, 1942 - December 19, 2005 (CHS-HS-1961)

Peacefully joined her Creator
on December 19, 2005 at the age of 63.

Her beloved husband **Rody**; children **Jay, Mon & AC, Weng, Api** (†), **Ina & Jat**; grandchildren **Mica, Miguel, Reeana, Reine & Raffy**; brother, sisters, brothers-in-law, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Interment today, December 23, 2005 at the Manila Memorial Park, Sucat, Parañaque after the 1:00 p.m. Mass at the Main Chapel of Santuario de San Jose, East Greenhills.

CARIDAD GAPUZAN LEONES

Born July 15, 1910
Born to eternal life December 13, 2005.

Her children **Angie & Nat, Leila & Nick, Dodee & Alexis, Ely, Helen & Elvie**; grandchildren **Cherish, Dale, Charity, Malou & Nonoy, Lani, Reginald, Adrian, Dorothy**; great-grandchildren **Katherine, John & Natalie**; relatives and friends mourn her passing and request the pious readers to pray for the eternal repose of her soul.

Her remains lie in state at Sta. Rita de Casia Parish, PhilAm Life Homes, Quezon City.

Interment will be on Saturday, December 24, 2005 at Loyola Memorial Park, Marikina after the 9:00 a.m. Mass.

"In Christ, all shall be made alive..." Corinthians 15:22

Consuelo "Chel" Araullo-Morata

Now peacefully rests in the infinite warmth and embrace of her Creator and her husband, Rigoberto, on December 22, 2005 at the age of 86.

Her devoted children and in-laws: **Nanette, Marie & Teddy Tan, Suzette & Bonnie Claudio, Joe & Beng, Rigs & Minette**; her grand-children and great-grandchildren, her relatives and friends, request the pious readers to pray for the repose of her soul.

Her body lies in state at
La Funeraria Paz in Sucat, Parañaque City.

Interment will be at Manila Memorial Park.
Schedule of time and date will be announced later.

An obituary with a picture can be a fitting tribute to your departed loved one.

Always caring...
INQUIRER OBITUARIES

DEATH ANNOUNCEMENT • MESSAGE OF THANKS • DEATH ANNIVERSARY • REQUIEMS • FREE OBIT DESIGN

"...absent from the body to be present with the Lord."
2 Corinthians 5:8

CLASSIFIEDS

NFA and DepEd launch Food-for-School Program in Caraga

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY AND THE Department of Education (DepEd) launched in Butuan City the Food-for-School program for pre-schoolers and grade 1 schoolchildren in pre-identified schools in the Caraga region. School beneficiaries, including schoolchildren from the other 5th and 6th-class municipalities nationwide were pre-selected on the basis of high incidence of families living below subsistence threshold level, high prevalence of malnutrition among grade 1 pupils and pre-school children and those with high drop-out rate. Under the Food-for-School program, school children will be rewarded with a kilogram of NFA rice for every school day they report to school for 90 days. Parents, meanwhile, will be provided with values formation activities and productivity skills training. Some 107,500 grade 1 pupils and pre-school children from highly depressed areas in Caraga will be the beneficiaries of this program. The NFA assured the timely delivery of rice for the program at least twice a month depending on the storage capacity of each school-beneficiary. The program is being undertaken nationwide to mitigate hunger and prevent the decline of the nutritional status of identified disadvantaged school children by providing them with food assistance. For more information on NFA programs, the public may send their inquiries via the Text NFA Program through mobile number 0917-6210927.

UPGRADE 2006: The 17th UP Diliman Job Fair

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES Office of Counseling and Guidance and the UP Junior Philippine Institute of Accountants produces one of the most awaited events of the business community. It time, once more, to bridge the gap of the graduating class and the workplace, and, for the students, to earn that competitive advantage through UPGRADE 2006, the 17th University Job Fair. The event will be held from Jan. 23-27, 2006 at the UP Bahay ng Alumni, Diliman, Quezon City.

Interested companies may contact the following numbers for any inquiries: Tel. No./Fax No.: 926.4162 or Tel No.: 929.5835 or email us at upjobfair2006@yahoo.com. You may also contact the organizing committee through: 0917.8158540 (Jill); 0919.5608386 (Maila); 0915.4082972 (Pete); 0916.2034170 (Kristy); 0917.8584532 (Crystle).

Food security stocks

THE NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY'S STOCKS in its warehouses debunk the reported fear of a rice shortage in 2006. Based on the NFA's operational distribution target and the current daily sales of 68,781 bags, the agency's rice stocks will last until June next year. The NFA holds around 29 percent of the country's rice stock totaling 1.6 million metric tons (MMT) which is projected to further increase with the agency's current intensified palay procurement this main harvest. For the last quarter alone, the NFA is targeting to buy 2.8 million bags of palay to beef up its rice stocks.

PHILIPPINE HEART CENTER
East Avenue, Quezon City

Is now accepting applications for
Academic Year 2006

FELLOWSHIPS:

I. **3-Year Fellowship Training Program in Adult Cardiology**
  - ◆ Certificate of Residency Training in Internal Medicine accredited by PCP
  - ◆ PCP Diplomate

II. **1-Year Subspecialty Fellowship Training Program in Electrophysiology, Cardiac Rehabilitation, Non-Invasive Cardiology, Invasive Cardiology, Peripheral Vascular and Critical Care Cardiology.**
  - ◆ Have completed Residency Training in Internal Medicine and Fellowship in Cardiology in PCP and PCC accredited institutions
  - ◆ PCP Diplomate
  - ◆ Submit a research proposal
  - ◆ Certificate of Fellowship

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on January 31, 2006**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on April 1, 2006**

III. **CV Anesthesiology Division**
  - ◆ 3 years Residency in General Anesthesia accredited by PBA (Board eligible)

IV. **Pediatric Cardiovascular Medicine Department**
  - ◆ 3 years Residency in General Pediatric accredited by PPS
  - ◆ at least passed written examination for Diplomate in Pediatrics

V. **Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery Division**
  - ◆ 4 years Residency in General Surgery accredited by PCS (Board eligible)

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on December 28, 2005**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on January 1, 2006**

RESIDENCIES : (For Medical Board Passers)

I. **Nuclear Medicine Section**
  - ◆ **Academic Graduates** – Medical School
  - ◆ **Medical Board Passer**

★ **Deadline for submission of application is on December 28, 2005**
★ **Academic Year 2006 starts on January 1, 2006**

General Requirements:
1. Medical Diploma
2. Transcript of Records with the General Weighted Average
3. Itemized Board Rating
4. Three (3) Letters of Recommendation with at least one letter written by the Training Officer &/or Director of the previous Training Programs / duplicate letters or photocopies signed by different Doctors will not be accepted)
5. Four (4) pcs. 2"x2" colored picture

Please address your communications to:
ARISTIDES G. PANLILIO, M.D.
Department Manager II
Office of Education and Research
Philippine Heart Center
East Avenue, Quezon City

For further inquiries, please contact Ms. Carmela M. Ocasion or Ms. Cleopatra Q. Palencia with Tel. Nos. 925-2401 locals 3234, 3235, 3236 & 3237 and Telefax 926-9622 or you can email to oer@phc.gov.ph

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PNOC
PNOC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Energy Complex, Merritt Road
Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City
Tel. No. 893-1320, Local 5282 / 5288

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND BID

The PNOC-Energy Development Corporation is inviting all interested suppliers to apply and submit sealed bids for the supply and delivery of the following:

	Approved Budget
1 lot of Calcite Inhibition Chemicals under FGM 50320	*PHP 3,600,000.00*
Two Hundred Eighty (280) Cubic Meters Liquid Caustic Soda under GT 517414	*PHP 4,650,000.00*

Eligibility forms and bidding documents shall be available for issuance upon payment of a non-refundable fee at the above address based on the following schedules:

PR No.	Date of Issue	Cost per Document	Contact Person
FGM 50320	December 23, 2005	PHP 400.00	Ms. Ms. Cristina Lynn M. Mercado loc. 5282
GT 517414	December 23, 2005	PHP 400.00	Mr. Anthony E. Ciriaco loc. 5288

For purposes of clarifying certain matters, a pre-bidding conference shall also be held on January 5, 2006 for FGM 50320 and GT 517414, 2:00 p.m. at the above address.

Applications for eligibility and sealed bids shall be submitted to, and registered with the PNOC-EDC Procurement Department at the above address, and thereafter dropped in the padlocked bid box thereat not later than 2:00 p.m. (Procurement Department Wall Clock Time) of January 26, 2006 for FGM 50320, and January 19, 2006 for GT 517414. Public opening of bids shall follow immediately thereafter. Late bids shall not be accepted.

Prospective bidders shall signify conformance to the bidding terms and conditions, as required, and shall ensure the same through proper submission/execution. Source of funding is from Internal Cash Generation of PNOC-EDC. All bids should be within the Approved Budget for the Contract in order to qualify.

PNOC-Energy Development Corporation reserves the right to annul the bidding process, to reject any or all bids, to waive any informality in the bids received and to accept such bid which is most advantageous to PNOC-EDC without thereby incurring liability to the affected bidder or bidders or any obligation to inform the affected bidder or bidders of the ground(s) for PNOC-EDC's action.

Chairman Bids and Awards Committee

(PDI--Dec. 23 & 30, 2005)

Republic of the Philippines
NATIONAL FOOD AUTHORITY
Regional Office No. V
Pier Site, Legazpi City

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The National Food Authority (NFA) in Region V, through its Regional Bids and Awards Committee (RBAC) invites contractors registered with and classified by the Philippine Accreditation Board (PCAB) to apply for eligibility and if found eligible, to bid for the following projects:

	Project	Location	Brief Description	Approved Budget	Calendar days of Completion
Lot 1	Repair of Secondary Screen doors of GID 1 & 2 whse	Palestina, Pili, Cam. - Sur	Fabrication of new secondary doors	Php 278,717.43	60 cal. days
Lot 2	Repair of Primary doors of GID 1 & 2 whse	-do-	Fabrication of new 15 primary doors	Php 429,391.23	80 cal. days
Lot 3	Repair of Provincial Office Bldg.	-do-	Re-roofing	Php 491,203.11	90 cal. days
Lot 4	Repair of training center	-do-	Re-roofing/repainting and repair of ceiling	Php 718,024.24	100 cal. days
Lot 5	Repair of Balintawak whse	Balintawak, Naga City	Repair of wooden canopy and perimeter fence	Php 186,289.72	60 cal. days

The Schedule of RBAC activities are as follows:

ACTIVITIES	DATE	TIME
1. Issuance of Eligibility forms	December 19-27, 2005 to	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
2. Receipt of Eligibility Requirements	December 22-29, 2005	8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
3. Issuance of Bid Documents	January 4-11, 2006	8:00 AM 5:00 PM
4. Pre-bid Conference	January 12, 2006	10:00 AM
5. Deadline for Submission of Bid	January 24, 2006	9:30 AM
6. Opening of Bid	January 24, 2006	10:00 AM

Eligibility forms/requirements may be secured and submitted at the RBAC Secretariat upon submission of letter of intent (LOI) and upon payment of a non-refundable amount of Php 500.00.

Prospective bidders should possess a valid PCAB license applicable to the above type of contracts. Eligibility Criteria includes the value of the prospective bidders largest single contract within the last three (3) years, completed within the period and similar to the contract to be bid which must be at least fifty percent (50%) of the budget for the contract (ABC) to be bid and must have key personnel and equipment available for the prosecution of the contract.

The prospective bidders shall submit simultaneously two (2) envelopes, Envelope A containing Technical Proposal and Envelope B Containing Financial Proposal. Contents of each of the bid envelopes are specified in the Instruction to Bidders.

The RBAC will use the non-discretionary pass/fail criteria in the eligibility check/screening as well as the Preliminary Examination of Bids. The RBAC will conduct the post-qualification of the lowest calculated bid (LCB).

Bidding documents will be issued to eligible bidders only upon payment of non-refundable amount of Php 1,000.00 per lot.

The venue for the pre-bidding conference, submission and opening of eligibility requirements and bidding documents shall be at the conference room, second floor, NFA, Regional Office V, Pier Site, Legazpi City.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Performance Security, Pre-bidding Conference, Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of R.A. 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulations-A (IRR-A).

Any eligible bidder can bid for one, a combination or all of the lots.

Other inquiries may be addressed to the RBAC Secretariat, NFA Region V, Legazpi City with Tel. No. (052) 480-7399/480-7015/480-7085/820-0018 and Fax No. (052) 480-7900.

NFA assumes no responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of their bids.

NFA reserves the right to reject any or all bids thereof, to waive any formalities or defects found therein, or to accept only such bids, or to award to any Contractor whose bid is considered most advantageous to NFA or to the government.

(Sgd.) **JOSE B. GUEVARA**
RBAC-Chairman

(PDI - Dec. 17 & 23, 2005)

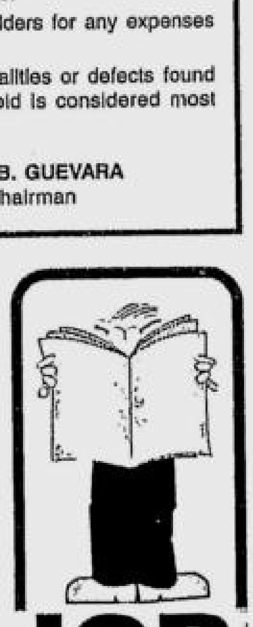
NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

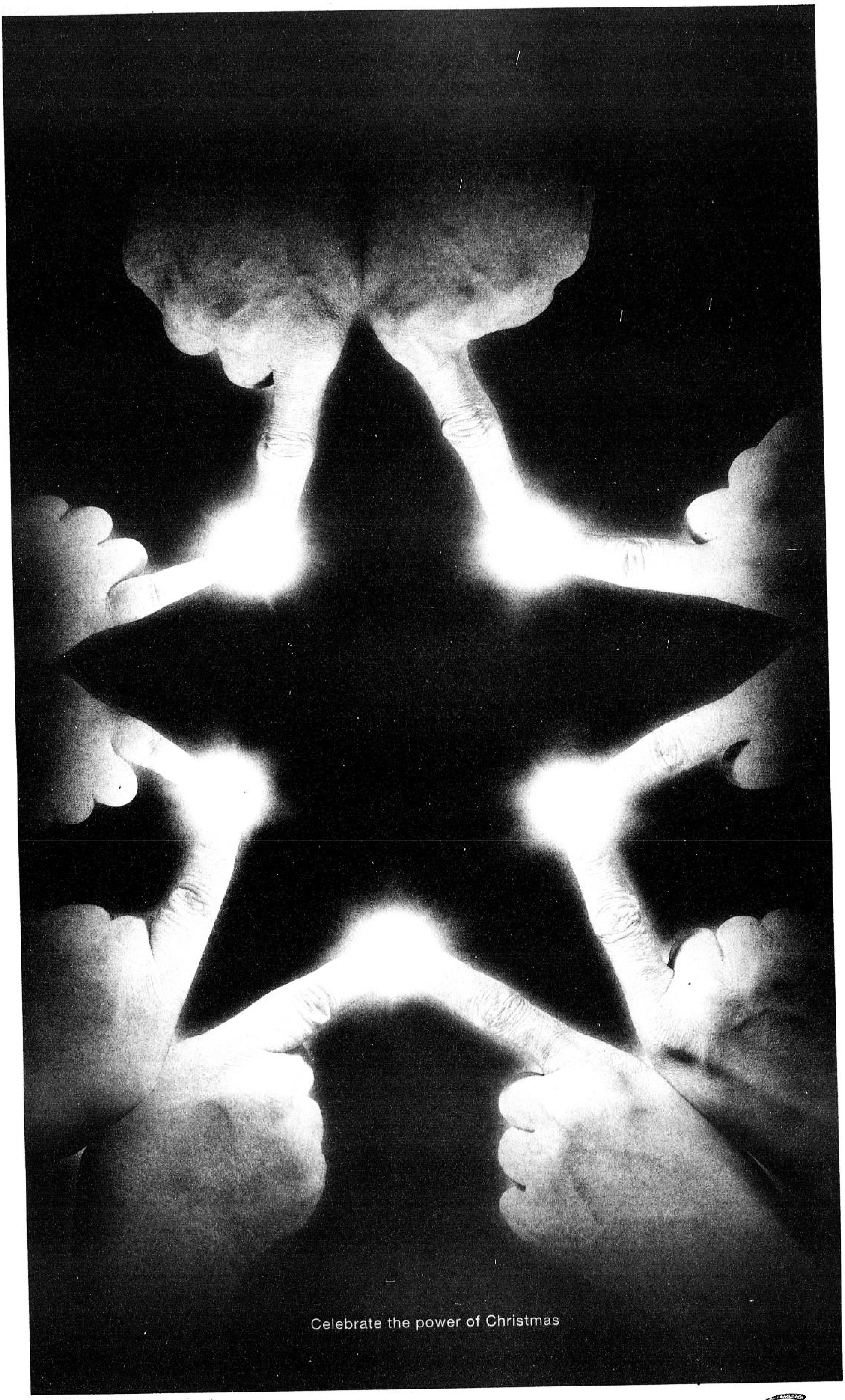
The **PSORIASIS FOUNDATION OF THE PHILIPPINES, INC.** wishes to inform the general public that the draw date for the "RAFFLE FOR A CAUSE" for the benefit of the indigent psoriasis patients in Mindanao which was originally scheduled on December 28, 2005 has been moved to March 6, 2006.

The raffle draw date will be held at the Out-Patient Service, Department of Dermatology, Davao Medical Center.
Thank you for bearing with us.

(Sgd.) **LALAINE RABE VISITACION, M.D.**
President
Psoriasis Foundation of the Philippines, Inc.

(PDI - Dec. 23, 2005)




Celebrate the power of Christmas

Like a light breaking through the darkness, may the hope that fills your heart this season carry on to every day of the coming year. First Gen wishes the entire nation a bright future and supports every Filipino's dream by providing clean and reliable energy to power the country's progress.

First Gen
Power for the Filipino

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FASHION

give love

is this love?

SHARE
a penchant for vintage finds with I Love You store
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CARE
for charitable ideals when PMAP models strut from catwalks to carols
p. C4

NURTURE
glitzy pleasures with Folded & Hung
p. D2

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Globe HANDYPHONE

Love, actually

I Love You makes vintage fashion high art

By Cheche V. Moral

PRESS THE BUTTON TO your left once and wait a sec to be buzzed in, the scribbled instruction says. In curlicues, the shop's three-word name is scrawled right above it. I Love You.

In a not-so-rare moment of idiocy and impatience, I press the button thrice till someone (annoyed, I suspect, though she doesn't show it) comes up to the door. She leads me to the basement.

From its tiny second-level cluttered girl's bedroom setup in San Antonio Village in Makati, the I Love You store, two months ago, has moved down (only literally) to the basement of a small, nondescript building in a busier section of town.

Pilar Place is a quaint little building on the far end of Makati Avenue near JP Rizal Street. It's located next door to a small hotel and right across a construction site. A new shopping mall, intimates Sharon Atillo, one of I Love You's owners. Her eyes light up; a new mall opening right across can only mean better business for I Love You. It is she who spotted the For Rent sign on this old site of a popular bar. "I've always liked this place," she smiles dreamily.

For the uninitiated, it's hard to predict what's behind the patinated white door and bright-pink-framed frosted bay window.

Endearing

I Love You.

No other phrase, perhaps, is as hackneyed and overused as the one made up by those three words. To the jaded, it's banal, prosaic, even cheesy. Now here's a shop named after it. As if consumers don't already see enough mediocre stuff in the big shops!

"We just wanted [the store's name] to be as endearing as possible," Sharon says with a laugh.

For a little over a year now, Sharon and partners Corinne Ching and Mimi Sanson have modestly expanded their tiny enterprise of reworked vintage fashions into a full lifestyle shop selling a motley of stuff from 70 consignees—no way like the kind you see in mainstream shops, not at all.

"Everything here is for sale," says Corinne, as she shows me around the shop. The basement store is still a modest affair, but it has matured in concept, she explains. The disorderly girl on Guijo Street (the shop's old home) has apparently grown up—there's a refined, if casual, order to her eclectic mess.

The walls are painted pristine white, from the winding staircase to the bar that has been converted into a cashier's counter. The main door opens to a small receiving area dominated by two, slightly worn oversized maroon couches, each propped with a duct-tape throw pillow. Several drawings by artist Kiko Escora adorn two walls. Strewn on the shelves is an assortment of used books, magazines, handmade binders, an unlined notebook covered with bus tickets, postcards of old bands' photographs. A sculpted gold wire frames an incandescent bulb illuminating the area.

Across the room are several racks of the store's one-of-a-kind apparel, created by Mimi and her production team, others consigned by designers like Kate Torralba. On the floor, propped against the glass-blocks wall, are a large, rather cumbersome lampshade, two framed artworks and a pair of white, round *banig* pillows. There are also vintage pairs of footwear.

Platform

"We want the store to be a platform for young artists to make small things," explains Corinne. "That way we hope to elevate fashion into a fine art."

Of course, the owners understand that not everyone may have a taste for vintage, reworked or not. They get their share of walk-ins who step out empty-handed.

"We like to tap people who think they can't get away with the stuff that we have," Corinne says. Which is why she and her partners are always on hand to guide clients in their choices. No dealings with clueless salespersons, thank you very much. The artist-owners, well, size you up, and estimate just how much amount of vintage you can take without giving you a fashion-makeover coronary.

"We're giving you the courage to explore art, not just fashion," Sharon says. "Our new clients are always surprised that our stuff can actually work with their personal styles. It's not just the fashion on the outside, but also from within. This is our way of redefining fashion as you know it."

Apart from apparel and accessories—belts, eyewear, bags, jewelry (quirky, vintage or reworked)—I Love You also offers haircut, makeup and total makeover services, all done in the confines of the store. Pinoy kitsch like Golden Gate notebooks, tiny tins of Tiger Balm, embellished *bayongs* are among the unexpected merchandise. At any point, a client may find one or two of the store's designers at work, bathed by beads of light from the rotating mirror ball at the center of the room.

"We keep importing clothes from China and Thailand," says Corinne. "This is our chance to let young designers know that if we create things, even little by little, who knows, maybe one day, other countries will be importing from us."

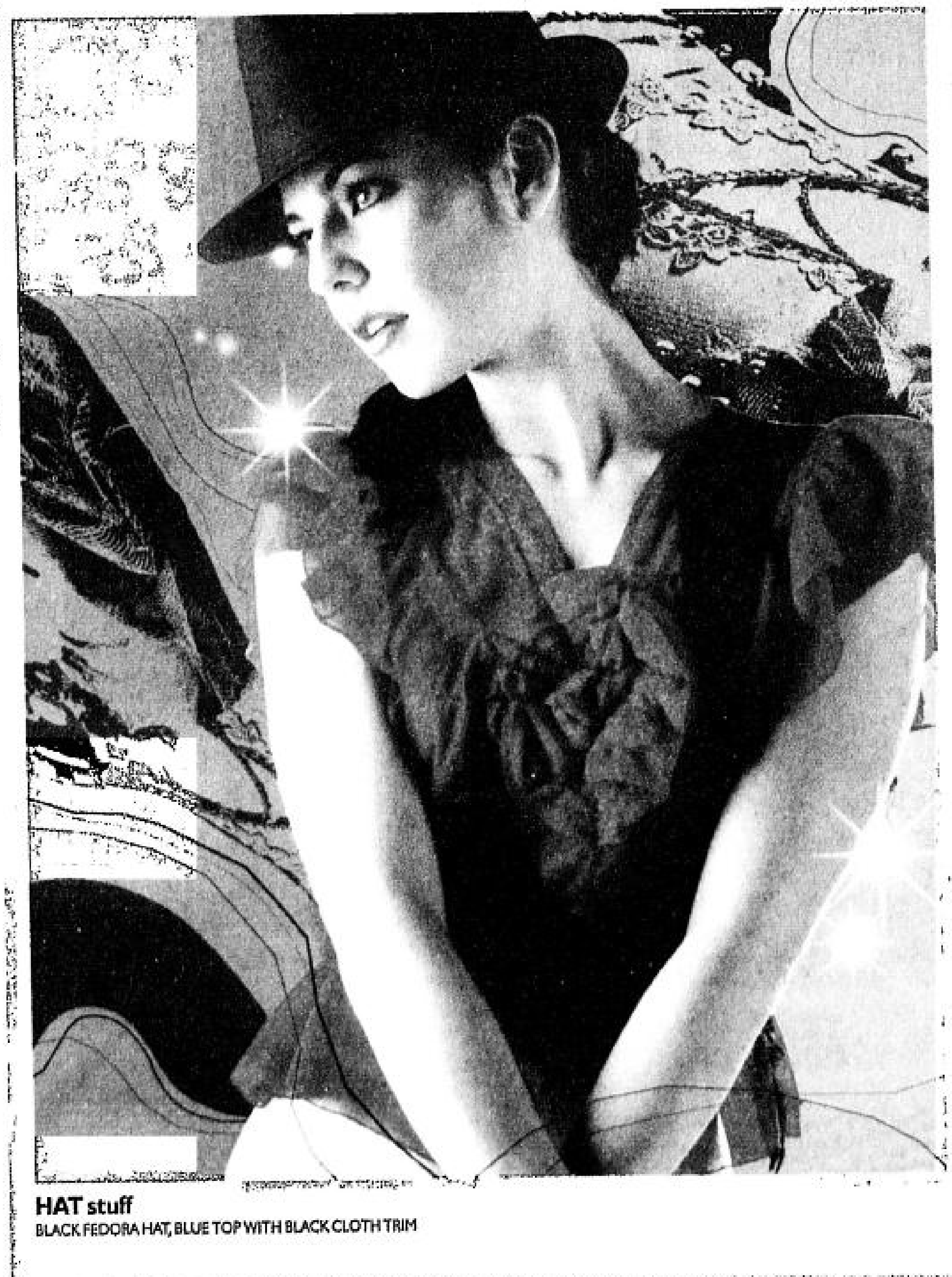
That's love, actually.

I Love You store is on the basement of 7840 Pilar Place, Makati Avenue, Makati City, next door to Aberdeen Court and Government bar. It's open 2-10 p.m. Tuesday to Sunday, and 2 p.m.-1 a.m. Friday and Saturday.

PHOTOGRAPHY
MIGUEL OLFINDO (0920-9615587)
STYLING MAUREEN DISINI (MAUREEN@DISINI.PH)
HAIR AND MAKEUP MARGE ENRIQUE (0917-9009739)
MODEL TANYA TANKIANG OF SOCIETY (8927741)
CLOTHES I LOVE YOU
DIGITAL IMAGING MAIA REYES
(MAIAREYES@YAHOO.COM)

LACED with bittersweet adornments

EMBELLISHED BUSTIER,
MULTI-LAYERED NECKLACE,
GOLD PLATED HEART NECKLACE

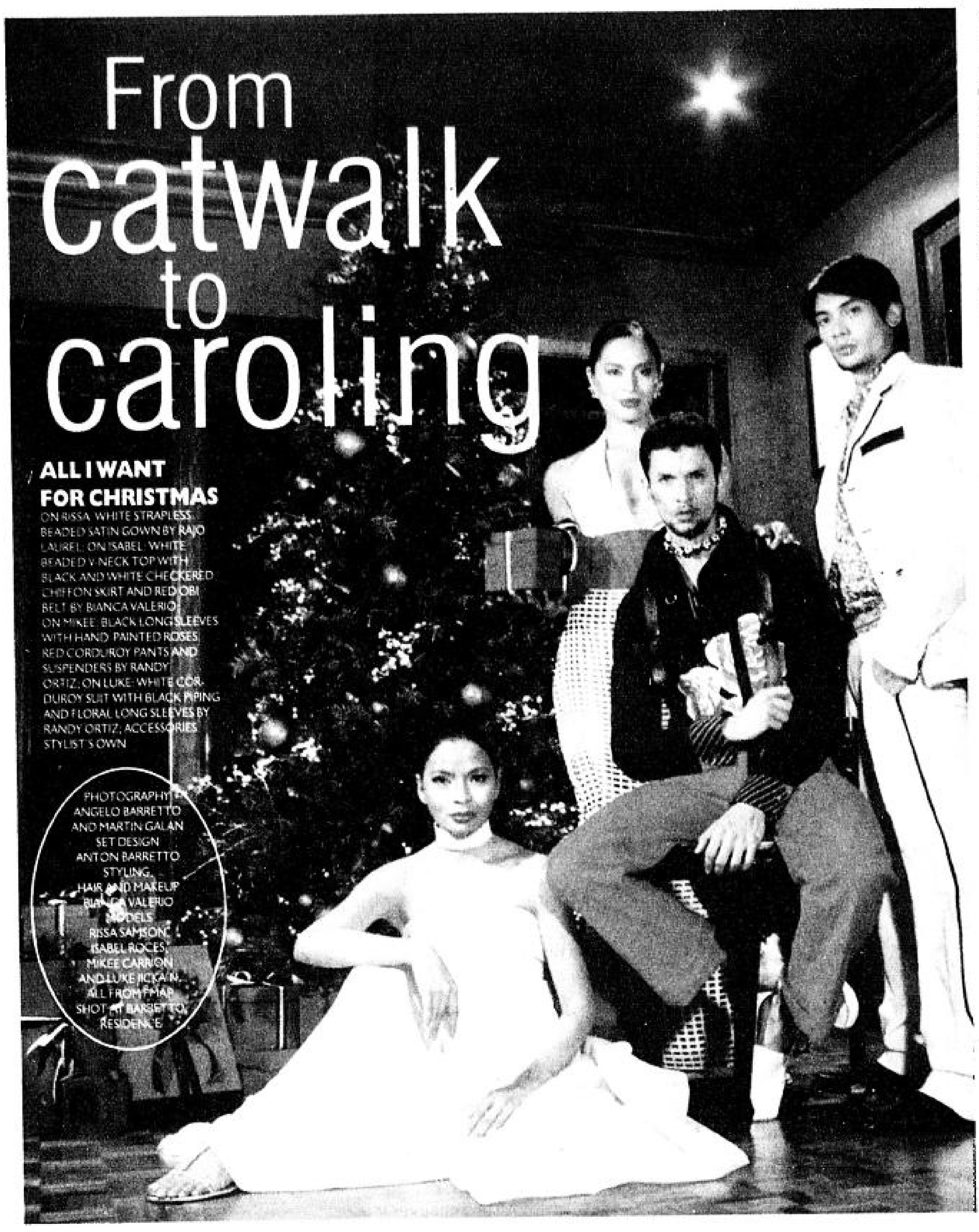

HAT stuff

BLACK FEDORA HAT, BLUE TOP WITH BLACK CLOTH TRIM

ALL-AROUND frills

BLACK TUTU-INSPIRED DRESS, PURPLE VELVET CHOKER WITH LACE

From catwalk to caroling



ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS
ON RISSA: WHITE STRAPLESS BEADED SATIN GOWN BY RAJO LAUREL; ON ISABEL: WHITE BEADED V-NECK TOP WITH BLACK AND WHITE CHECKERED CHIFFON SKIRT AND RED OBI BELT BY BIANCA VALERIO; ON MIKEE: BLACK LONG SLEEVES WITH HAND-PAINTED ROSES, RED CORDUROY PANTS AND SUSPENDERS BY RANDY ORTIZ; ON LUKE: WHITE CORDUROY SUIT WITH BLACK PIPING AND FLORAL LONG SLEEVES BY RANDY ORTIZ; ACCESSORIES: STYLIST'S OWN

PHOTOGRAPHY: ANGELO BARRETTO AND MARTIN GALAN
SET DESIGN: ANTON BARRETTO
STYLING, HAIR AND MAKEUP: BIANCA VALERIO
MODELS: RISSA SAMSON, ISABEL ROCES, MIKEE CARRION AND LUKE JICKAIN, ALL FROM PMAP
SHOT AT BARRETTO'S RESIDENCE

Give love...

Compiled by Jenni Epperson

... to people who matter the most, and don't expect anything in return.
—Raymond Gutierrez, TV host

...not just on Christmas day.
—Louie Cordero, painter
WWW.FUTUREPROSPECTSPH.COM

... and give a little more.
—Stephanie Zubiri, student

.. receive love, make love under the Christmas tree.
—Cindy Kurleto, actress, MTV VJ

... receive, share and express it, do anything as long as you love. Besos!
—Alex Escat, model, student

... whenever and wherever it's needed.
—Anton Barretto, Pineapple store owner

AXN
Time
AVAILABLE AT SM DEPT. STORES
active lifestyle

From page C4

is taken at face value. No depth. No meaning. No purpose.

The Professional Models Association of the Philippines (PMAP), a nonprofit organization run by models, is often taken at face value by people.

"Many people may not be fully aware of PMAP's outreach and caroling activities," said Rissa Mananquil-Samson, PMAP president. "We have quietly been raising funds and helping the less fortunate in our own little way. This is something that has been done and continued through all generations of PMAP."

In the past years, according to Samson, the PMAP has organized an annual outreach program with the Tahanan Sta. Luisa (a home for sexually abused girls), Habitat for Humanity, Jesus Loves the Little Children Foundation and Hospicio de San Jose.

"We also have participated in several fundraising projects for the World Wildlife Fund of the Philippines and celebrity bowling for Bantay Kalikasan," she added.

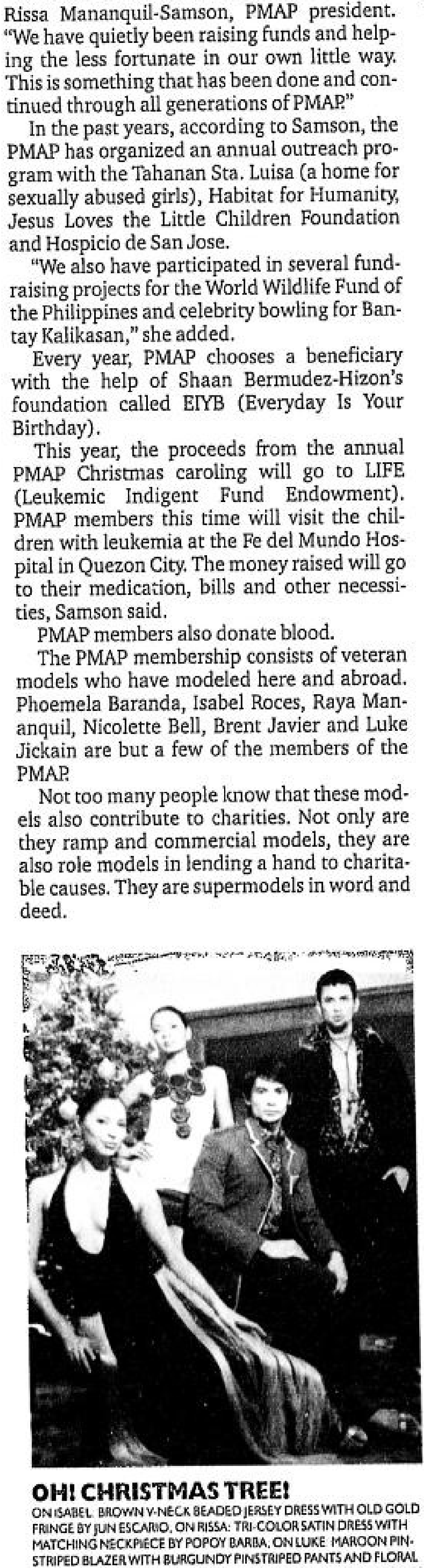
Every year, PMAP chooses a beneficiary with the help of Shaan Bermudez-Hizon's foundation called EIYB (Everyday Is Your Birthday).

This year, the proceeds from the annual PMAP Christmas caroling will go to LIFE (Leukemic Indigent Fund Endowment). PMAP members this time will visit the children with leukemia at the Fe del Mundo Hospital in Quezon City. The money raised will go to their medication, bills and other necessities, Samson said.

PMAP members also donate blood.

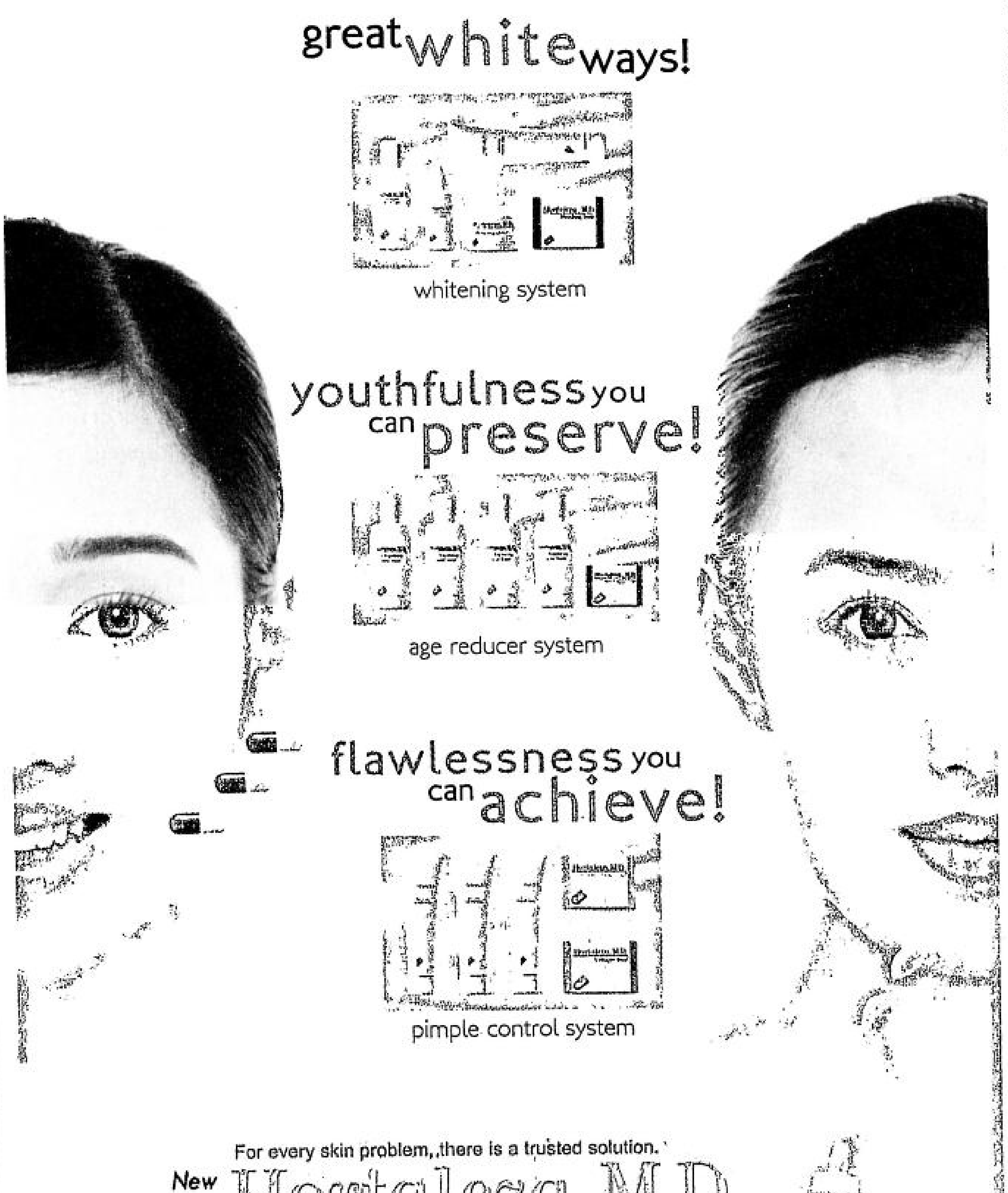
The PMAP membership consists of veteran models who have modeled here and abroad. Phoemela Baranda, Isabel Roces, Raya Mananquil, Nicolette Bell, Brent Javier and Luke Jickain are but a few of the members of the PMAP.

Not too many people know that these models also contribute to charities. Not only are they ramp and commercial models, they are also role models in lending a hand to charitable causes. They are supermodels in word and deed.



OH! CHRISTMAS TREE!
ON ISABEL: BROWN V-NECK BEADED JERSEY DRESS WITH OLD GOLD FRINGE BY JUN ESCARIO; ON RISSA: TRI-COLOR SATIN DRESS WITH MATCHING NECKPIECE BY POPOY BARBA; ON LUKE: MAROON PINSTRIPED BLAZER WITH BURGUNDY PINSTRIPED PANTS AND FLORAL LONG SLEEVES BY RANDY ORTIZ; ON MIKEE: BLACK SUIT WITH FAUX FUR-TRIMMED HOOD, PINSTRIPED PANTS AND FLORAL LONG SLEEVES BY RANDY ORTIZ; ACCESSORIES: STYLIST'S OWN

SKIN PERFECTION, SYSTEMIZED SOLUTIONS



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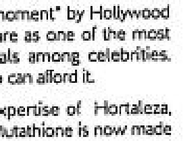
Our prescription? Hortaleza, M.D. Whitening System! Gives your skin radiance by day and lightening by night. Used regularly, this system works hard to effectively lighten blemishes and dark spots, while providing protection from the skin-darkening effects of the sun and the environment! So when it comes to skin whitening, go with Hortaleza, M.D. Whitening System!

Get a Whitening starter kit for only ₱299*!

Whitening you can swallow!
Hortaleza, M.D. Illuminous Whitening Capsule



Achieving porcelain-white, celebrity complexion and making it last is a process that goes beyond the usual skin-deep solutions. Thanks to the discovery of Glutathione, getting more permanent results has finally become so effortless.

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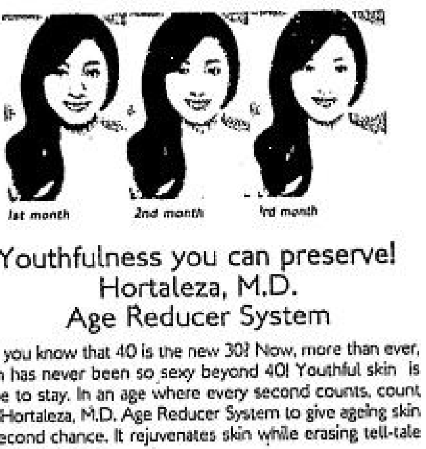
However, with the cutting-edge expertise of Hortaleza, M.D., the once-prohibitively priced Glutathione is now made accessible with new Hortaleza, M.D. Illuminous Whitening Capsule! Enjoy the multi-benefits of Glutathione whitening and anti-ageing, plus Vitamins C and E with Alpha Lipoic Acid. All in one capsule for only ₱39.75 each! That's 53% more affordable than other brands! Get it in packs of 30's and 10's at all HBC Home of Beauty Exclusives Stores nationwide. Now isn't that illuminating news for your skin?



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Flawlessness you can achieve!
Hortaleza, M.D.
Pimple Control System

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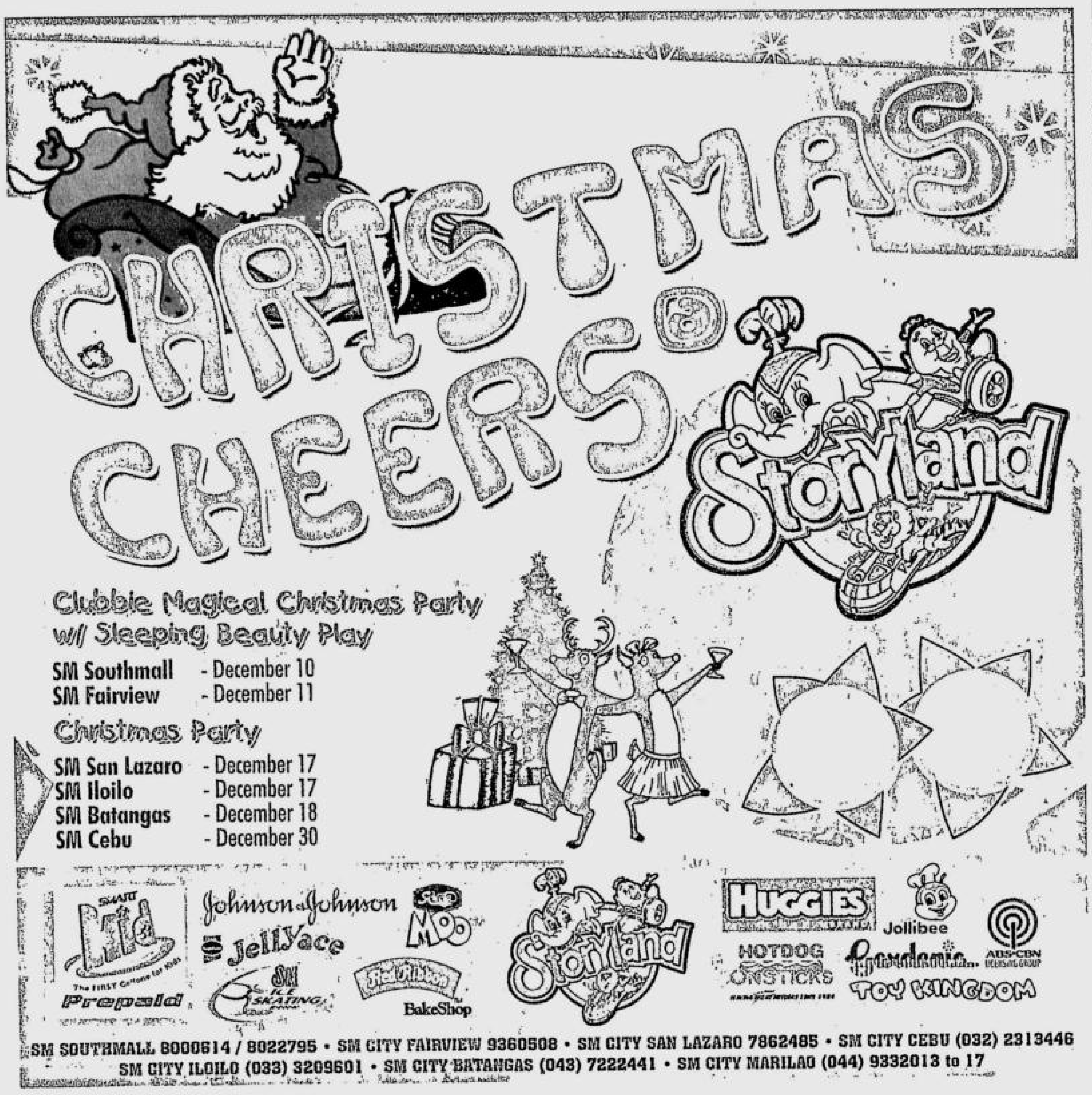

Clubbie Magical Christmas Party w/ Sleeping Beauty Play

SM Southmall - December 10
SM Fairview - December 11

Christmas Party

SM San Lazaro - December 17
SM Iloilo - December 17
SM Batangas - December 18
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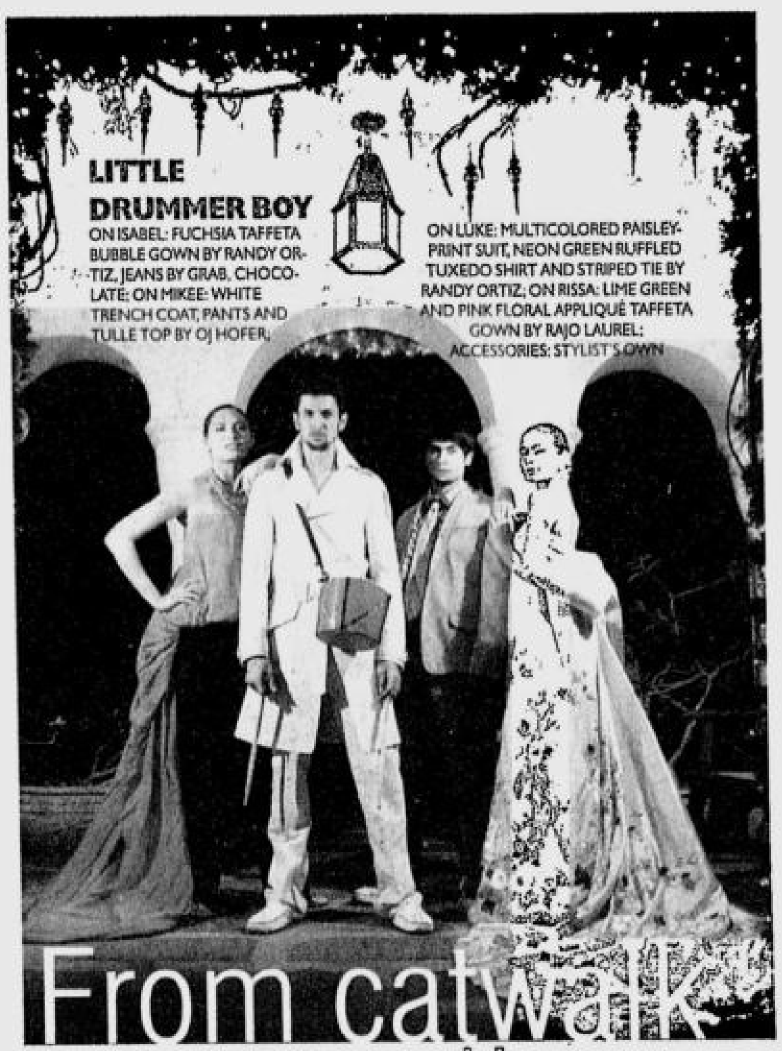


LITTLE DRUMMER BOY

ON ISABEL: FUCHSIA TAFFETA BUBBLE GOWN BY RANDY ORTIZ, JEANS BY GRAB, CHOCOLATE; ON MIKEE: WHITE TRENCH COAT, PANTS AND TULLE TOP BY OJ HOFER; ON LUKE: MULTICOLORED PAISLEY-PRINT SUIT, NEON GREEN RUFFLED TUXEDO SHIRT AND STRIPED TIE BY RANDY ORTIZ; ON RISSA: LIME GREEN AND PINK FLORAL APPLIQUÉ TAFFETA GOWN BY RAJO LAUREL; ACCESSORIES: STYLIST'S OWN

From catwalk to caroling

Models raise money for leukemia victims this Christmas

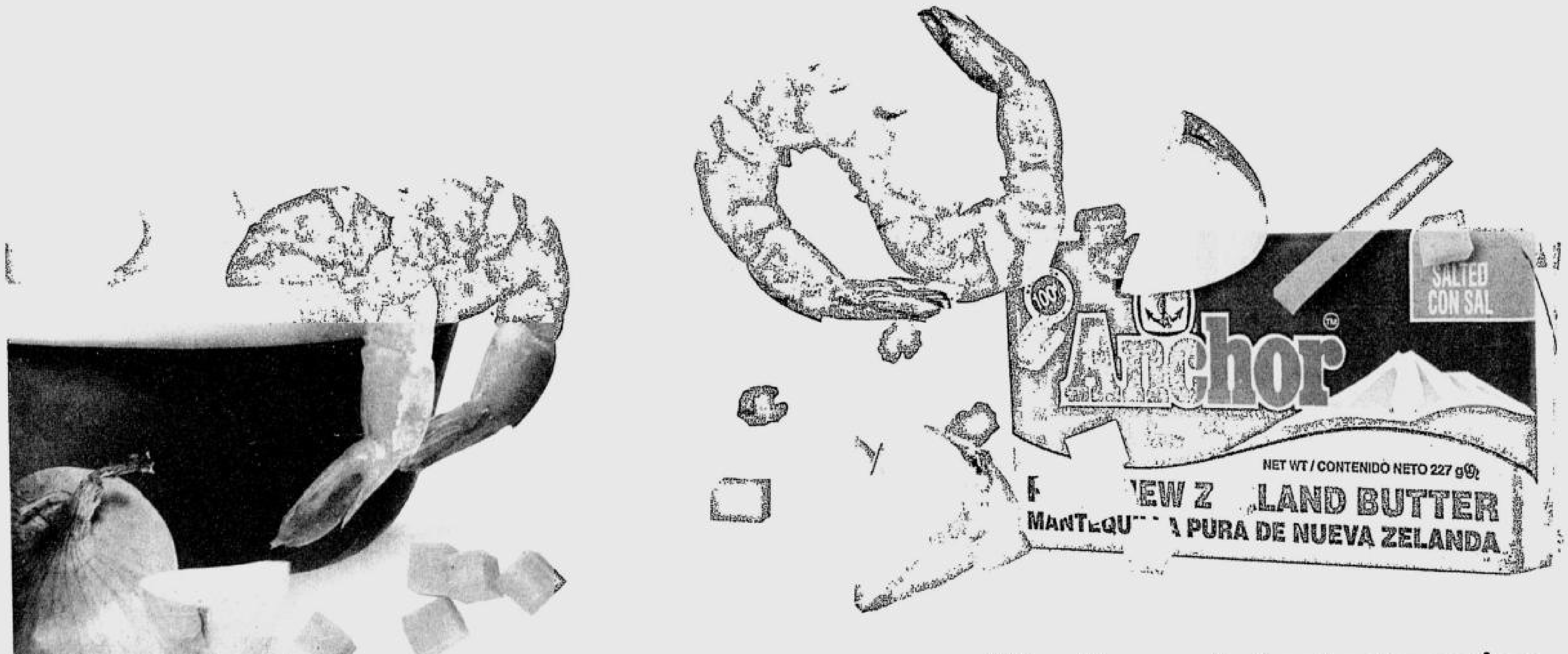
By Bianca Valerio
Contributor

SO THEY CALL US supermodels... But what does "super" really mean?

That we can strut in obscenely high stilettos and laugh in the face of varicose veins? Or that we can create chaos backstage between wardrobe changes and yet enter the stage with amazing grace? Or that we can never seem to add shameful pounds to our so-called svelte figures? Or that we can get away with serial dating because we have been stereotyped as glamorized airheads?

In an industry where everything is either overly accessorized or pristinely Photoshop-ed, what lies beneath is almost never seen or heard of. The essence of one's self

FROM CATWALK/ C3



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NEW ZEALAND BUTTER
MANTEQUILLA PURA DE NUEVA ZELANDA

The Season's best attraction.

Anchor Butter.
It's the secret of the Season's finest.
Because this Christmas, only the creamiest
and the tastiest will do.
There's just no substitute for it.

Seafood Pastel

INGREDIENTS:
CRUST : 1 1/2 cups all purpose flour • 1 cup ANCHOR BUTTER, cubed • 1 tsp salt • 1/2 cup cold water
EGGWASH: 2-3 tbsps water stirred in 1 pc egg yolk, slightly beaten
FILLING: 1/4 cup white wine • 1 cup scallops • 1/2 cup ANCHOR BUTTER • 1/2 cup onion, chopped • 1/2 cup celery, chopped • 3/4 cup carrot, cubed • 3/4 cup potato, cubed • 1 cup shrimps suahe, peeled • 1 cup squid rings • 1/4 cup all purpose flour • 2 cups shrimp broth • 1/2 cup all purpose cream • 1/2 - 1 tsp fine salt • 1/4 tsp ground black pepper

PROCEDURE:
PASTRY DOUGH: Place flour, salt and **ANCHOR BUTTER** in a food processor and pulse until mixture resembles the size of a pea. Add water a tablespoon at a time and pulse. Check dough by squeezing with your finger to see if it holds together. If not, add more water. Remove from bowl and shape into a ball. Refrigerate for 20 mins.
FILLING: Pour wine in a pan and simmer. Add scallops and cook until most of the liquid evaporates. Set aside.
Melt **ANCHOR BUTTER** in a saucepan. Saute onion and celery. Add carrots and potatoes. Add shrimp and squid rings. Cook until shrimp changes color. Add scallops. Stir in flour. Pour in shrimp broth and stir in cream. Season with salt and pepper. Simmer for 5 mins. Transfer seafood mixture to a baking dish. On a slightly floured surface, roll out dough by using a rolling pin and place on top of your dish. Brush dough with eggwash. Bake for 40 minutes at 400° F until crust turns golden brown.
Makes 6 servings.

For feedback, e-mail us at lifestyle@inquirer.com.ph

LIFESTYLE

Contributing editors
Jenni Epperson
and Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

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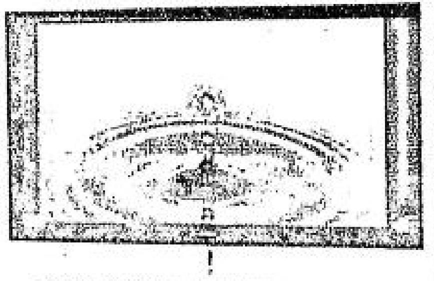
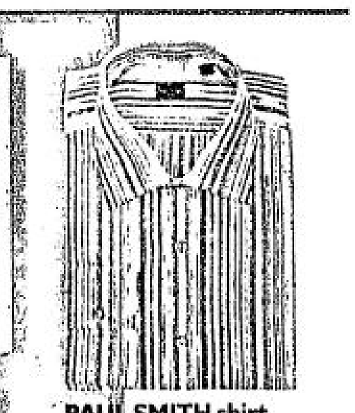
FASHION

LACOSTE polo shirt

BMW X5


SONY Grand Wega


PAUL SMITH shirt

Survey says . . .

Top toys on most big boys' Christmas wish list

APPLES' PICKINGS

Apples Aberin-Sadhwani

SAVE THE BEST FOR LAST, so they say. To prove this old adage true, I find myself still trying to figure out what to give my better half two days before C-Day. And if you're anything like me, you're probably also still grasping at straws.

Sure, sure, it's the thought that counts. But the truth is, if you really do put a lot of consideration into what present to give, you can ensure the receiver (your man, in this particular case) will appreciate not just the gesture but also the gift itself.

So, while I'm still in the process of finding just the thing to make my husband's day, I thought I'd make things easier for last-minute shoppers like me by conducting a little survey among the male of the species. I asked a number of men what they would like to receive for Christmas and received a host of interesting answers, from the very high-end (my friend Philip Cuazon wants a Vertu phone this year) to the extremely simple (Fiama's Vince Santos will settle for a heartfelt greeting card, in lieu of World Cup 2006 tickets).

To help you find that perfect stocking stuffer for your inamorata, here is a categorized list of most of the answers I gathered. But before anything else, do remember this: If all else fails, give love, ladies, and you simply can't go wrong.

The techie tribe

Number one on most men's wish lists this year is none other than the iPod... But hold your horses, dearie. We're not talking about any ordinary pod. Let me get more specific by saying that it should be an iPod video. Photographer Xander Angeles is just one of the many who want one of these 60-gb babies.

Also high on the techie's Christmas wish list is a new computer or laptop. Mac-whiz Elbert Cuenca wants a 20-inch Apple iMac G5 with built-in iSight (calling Mrs. Claus). Meanwhile, others will settle for external drives for their laptops.

Neverland's denizens

Boys will be boys, so it seems, as majority of the respondents asked for new cars or motorbikes. Budget permitting, one doctor friend would like to have a BMW X5. But he'll take the Matchbox version anytime.

Couch potatoes, on the other hand, dream of the latest biggest television sets in the market like a Sony 50" Grand Wega. Don't forget the matching home theater system, mind you.

Sensible sweeties

Don't despair, ladies. There are still men who want the simpler things in life. One practical chap wants nothing but hankies this season while another would love to receive items for the home.

Musician Rico Blanco wouldn't mind receiving a sturdy ironing board or something just as useful, for example. Then there are those who'd be more than happy to get generic cotton sports shirts. No need to splurge on the branded ones, as these basics will suffice.

Dapper dandies

There's nothing wrong if your man is clued into the latest in fashion or if his closet is chock-full of designer goodies from Gucci or Prada. It should, in fact, make things easier for you.

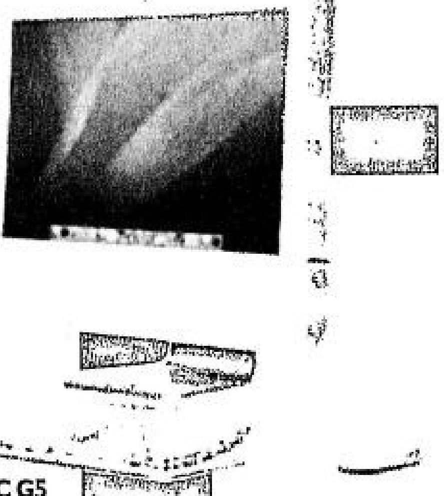
Quite a number of male fashionistas asked for designer goodies like crisp pinstriped shirts from Paul-Smith or an item from the latest Y3 collection. Jack Spade's bags and accessories are also interesting options. So, if the budget is right, swipe 'em cards away!

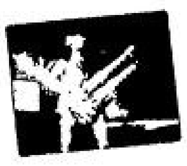
The metrosexuals

Apparently, a good number of men are in touch with their feminine side and are not afraid to show it. Spa certificates (for massages and facials) were high on the macho male's wish list. In fact, it came in second to the ubiquitous iPod.

There are a lot of spas in the metro nowadays so take your pick from the truly luxurious like the Oriental Spa at the Mandarin, Urban Spa, or more affordable ones like The Spa or Mabuhay Spa, to name a few. Better yet, create your own spa at home, for a more budget-friendly and personalized gift.

E-mail the author at afashion@inquirer.com.ph


iMAC G5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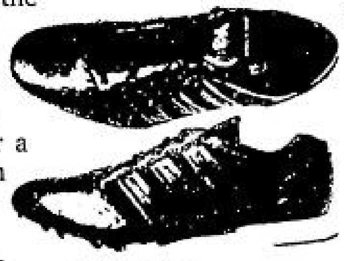
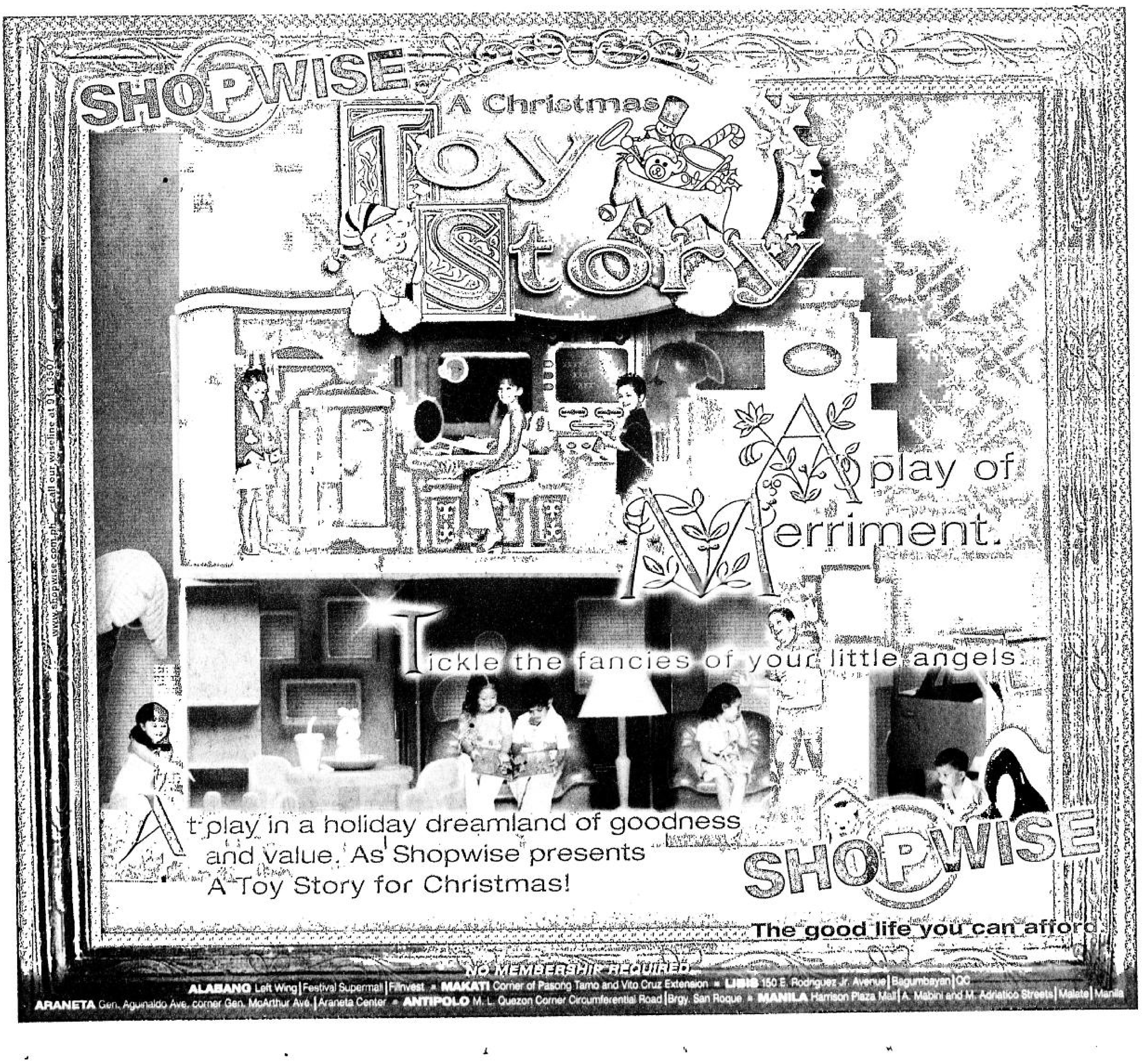

ADIDAS Y3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A Christmas
Toy Story
A play of Merriment.
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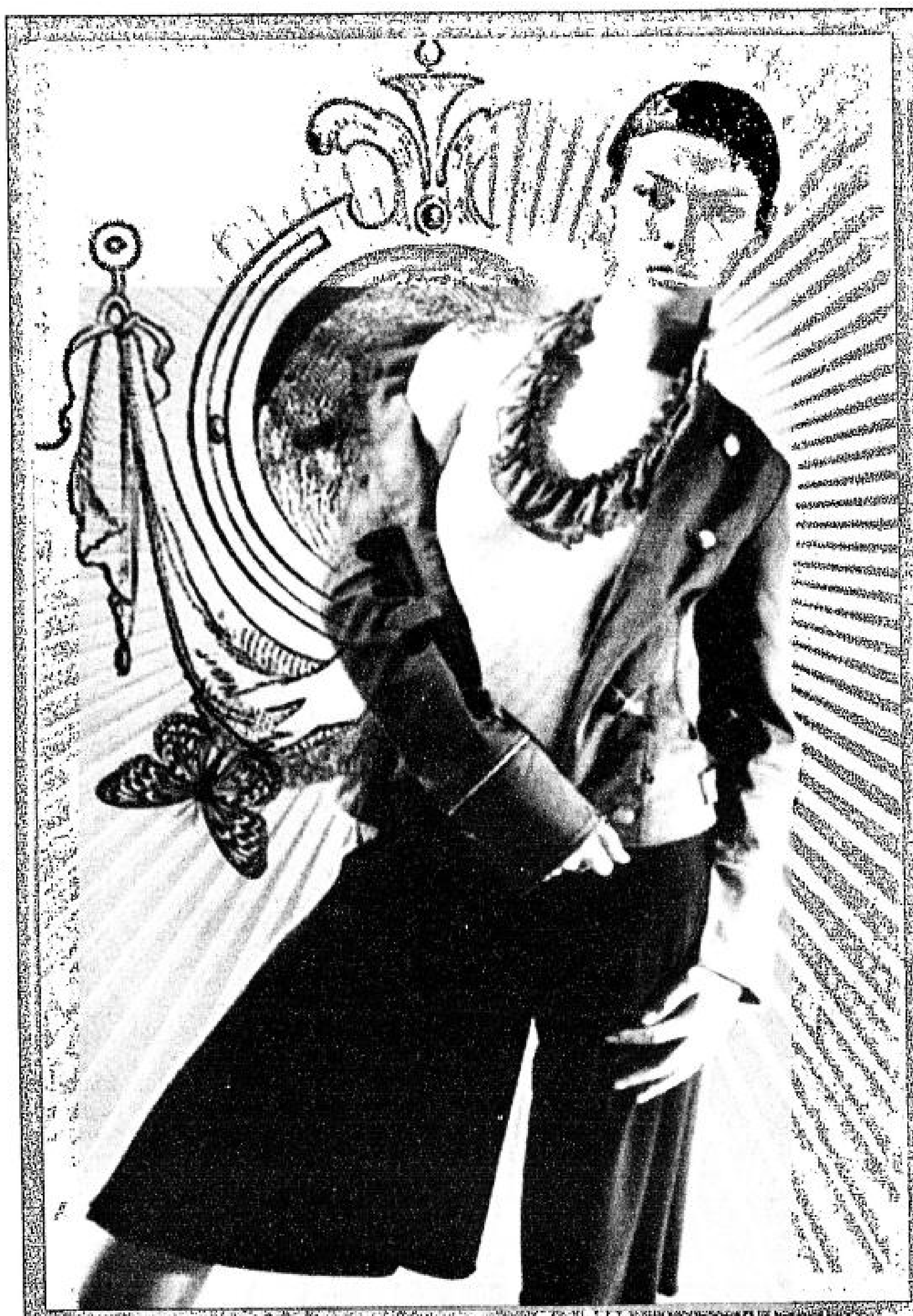
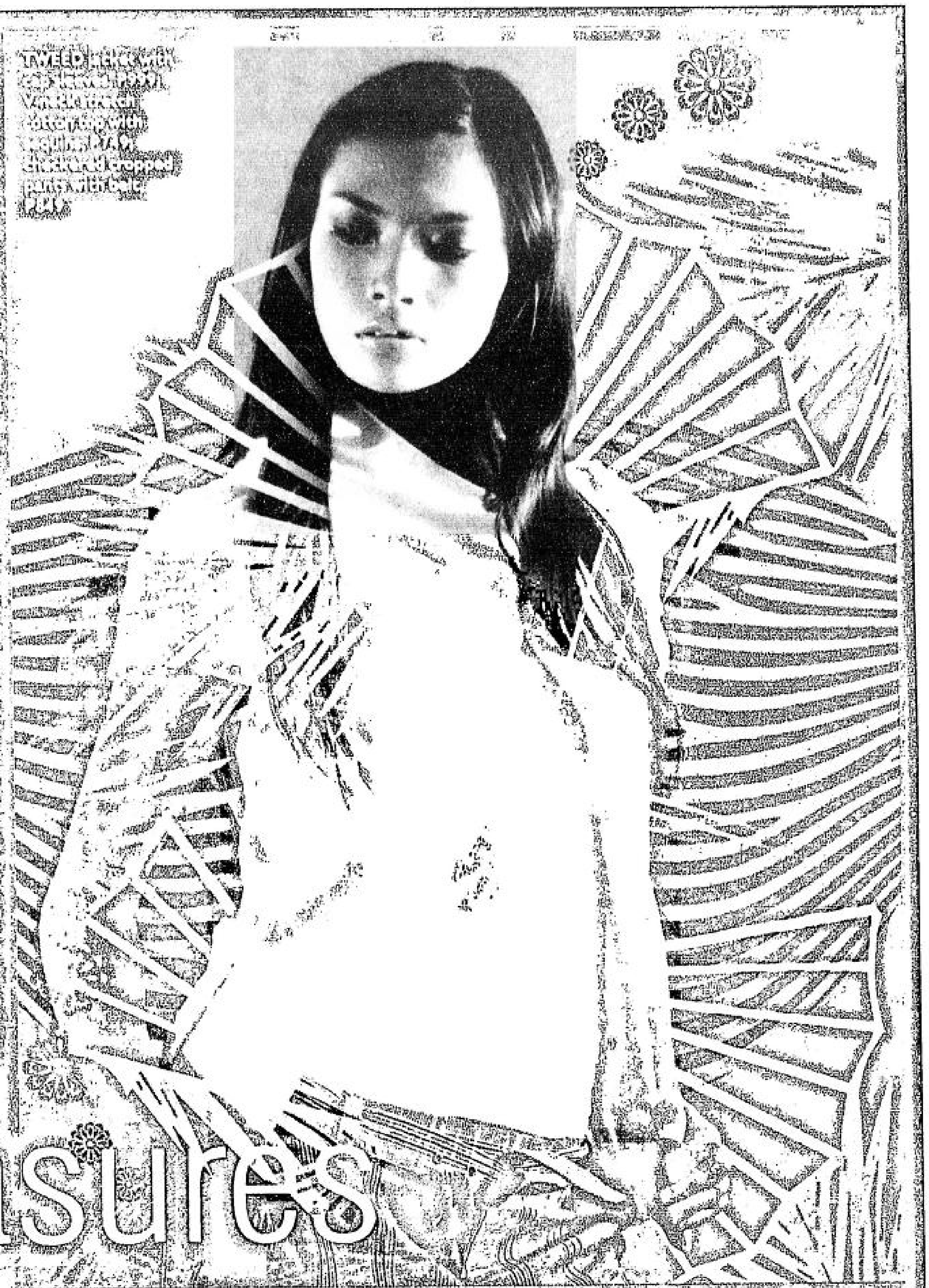
ARANETA Gen. Aguinaldo Ave. corner Gen. McArthur Ave. | Araneta Center ▪ **ANTIPOLO** M. L. Quezon Corner Circumferential Road | Brgy. San Roque ▪ **MANILA** Harrison Plaza Mall | A. Mabini and M. Adriatico Streets | Malate | Manila



STRIPED cotton stretch halter top with contrast ruffles, P599; culottes with box pleats, P599; military jacket with gold buttons, P1,199



TWEED jacket with cap sleeves, P999; V-neck stretch cotton top with sequins, P[illegible]; checkered cropped pants with belt, P[illegible]

Glitzy pleasures

Mabuhay!

Jenni Epperson

EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK the holidays sparkle. Malls are decked with holly. Lampposts are adorned with glittery *parol*. And your neighbors' garish Christmas lights are enough to send you to your ophthalmologist.

But hey, it's the season of sharing, caring and loving (yes, your neighbor, too) so just don your Jackie O. shades, flash your pearly whites, wear some glitz and spread some ho-ho-ho cheers (again, also to your neighbors)!

But because you're not one to be outdone by your friendly neighbors, get dolled up in glittery garb (enough to send them to their ophthalmologists). It's also the best way to fend off mean Scrooges.

This season, stocking stuffers such as watch, jewelry and a gift check for a weekend getaway are delish, but they sadly put a dent on your paycheck. With the same shameless shimmer and at a tenth of the cost, Folded & Hung's holiday collection will give you the same glamour buzz without the budget hangover.

Folded & Hung's holiday collection will give you the glamour buzz you need without the budget hangover

Cute-ture

Sequined tops in divine aubergine and opulent gold, bejeweled clutches and—my favorite—jackets with shiny, happy buttons. They are really quite show-stoppers and "Oh my gosh" pieces.

The jackets have dramatic silhouettes with Victorian and Gucci-esque collars. I wore one of these cool coverings at a party and my discerning gay crew gushed, "Wow, is it couture?" I haughtily replied, "It's cute-ture, sister. It's from Folded & Hung."

Folded & Hung's sparkly caboodle is the answer to the trendy tribe's call for chic and cheap. No wonder it has become the fashion lair of catwalk cuties and cool *colegialas*. Also with the blazers and shimmery tops great for during and after office hours, the nine-to-five yuppies are sure to have a field day.

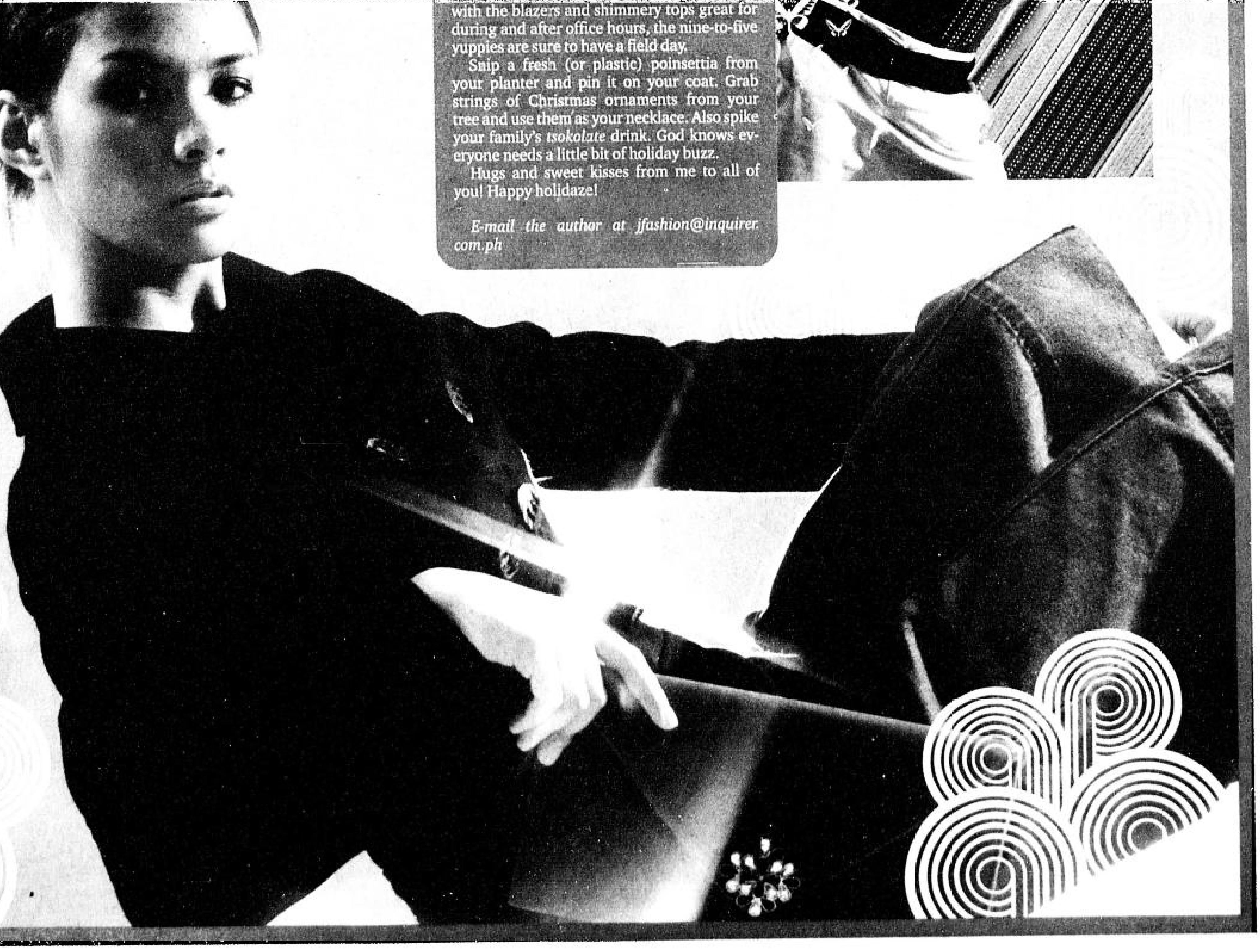
Snip a fresh (or plastic) poinsettia from your planter and pin it on your coat. Grab strings of Christmas ornaments from your tree and use them as your necklace. Also spike your family's *tsokolate* drink. God knows everyone needs a little bit of holiday buzz.

Hugs and sweet kisses from me to all of you! Happy holidaze!

E-mail the author at jfashion@inquirer.com.ph

COTTON stretch top with sequined neck detail, P699; velvet sash with [illegible], P299; white cropped pants, P699

DOUBLE-BREASTED jacket with oversized buttons, P999; denim gaucho pants, P799; clutch with brooch, P699



PHOTOGRAPHY
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(0916-7815590)
MODEL CHRIZENDA
CECILIO OF CALCARRIE'S
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MA. CAMILLE FRANCISCO
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JOEL CATAPANG
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Spectacular Fireworks!

SM Megamall	Dec 23, 29
SM City North Edsa	Dec 24, 31
SM City Fairview	Dec 23, 30
SM City Sta. Mesa	Dec 30
SM Supercenter Valenzuela	Dec 30
SM City Bicutan	Dec 30
SM Southmall	Dec 23, 30
SM City Sucat	Dec 23, 30
SM City Bacoor	Dec 23, 30
SM City San Lazaro	Dec 30

Provincial Luzon and VisMin Malls Schedule

SM City Batangas	Dec 30
SM Supercenter Molino	Dec 25, 30
SM City Pampanga	Dec 23, 30
SM City Marilao	Dec 23, 29
SM City Lucena	Dec 23, 30
SM City Cebu	Dec 24, 31
SM City Iloilo	Dec 24, 31

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SM CITY MARILAO • SM CITY PAMPANGA • SM CITY BAGUIO • SM CITY LUCENA • SM CITY CEBU • SM CITY ILOILO • SM CITY DAVAO • SM CITY CAGAYAN DE ORO • SM SUPERCENTER VALENZUELA • SM SUPERCENTER MOLINO

Christmas with the Stars

Catch the stars of the 2005 Metro Manila Film Festival at SM Supermalls!

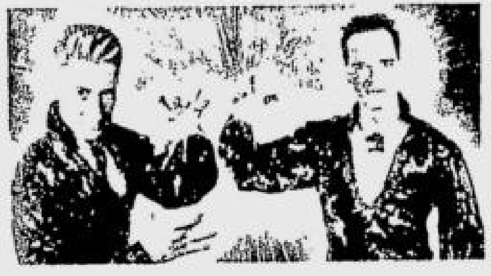
SM Megamall	Dec 26, 2pm
SM City North Edsa	Dec 27, 2pm
SM City Fairview	Dec 27, 5pm
SM City Fairview	Dec 28, 5pm
SM City Manila	Dec 29, 2pm
SM City San Lazaro	Dec 30, 2pm
SM City Sta. Mesa	Dec 30,5pm
SM City Sucat	Dec 30, 4pm
SM Southmall	Dec 30, 5pm
SM Southmall	Jan 3, 2006, 2pm

"Tales from the Enchanted Kingdom: Exodus" mall tour:

SM City San Lazaro	Dec 23

Christmas Magical Special

Las Vegas illusionists Jeff Simon and Tom Silver will show off their magic prowess to holiday shoppers at SM Megamall on December 23.



Caroling Cheers

Guest choral groups will sing their Christmas repertoire :

SM City Sucat	Dec 23
SM City Lucena	Dec 23
SM City Cagayan de Oro	Dec 23
SM City Batangas	Dec 23

REGENT Columbia's

OWWA-Family Day

Balikbayans are invited to spend the holidays with their families at SM Malls:

SM City Marilao	Dec 26-30
SM City Davao	Dec 23-25

Make-A-Child-Happy

SM Foundation, Inc., in cooperation with SM Supermalls, bring Christmas cheers to orphans at:

SM City Sta. Mesa	Dec 23
SM Supercenter Valenzuela	Dec 26
SM City Fairview	Dec 27
SM City Bacoor	Dec 28
SM City North Edsa	Dec 29

HOLIDAY MALL HOURS

Dec 23	**10am-12MIDNIGHT**
Dec 24	**9am-7pm**
Dec 25	**10am-10pm**
Dec 26-28	**10am-10pm**
Dec 29	**10am-12MIDNIGHT*** **10am-10pm** *(Provincial Malls only)*
Dec 30	**10am-10pm**
Dec 31	**9am-7pm**
Jan 01, 2006	**12nn-10pm**

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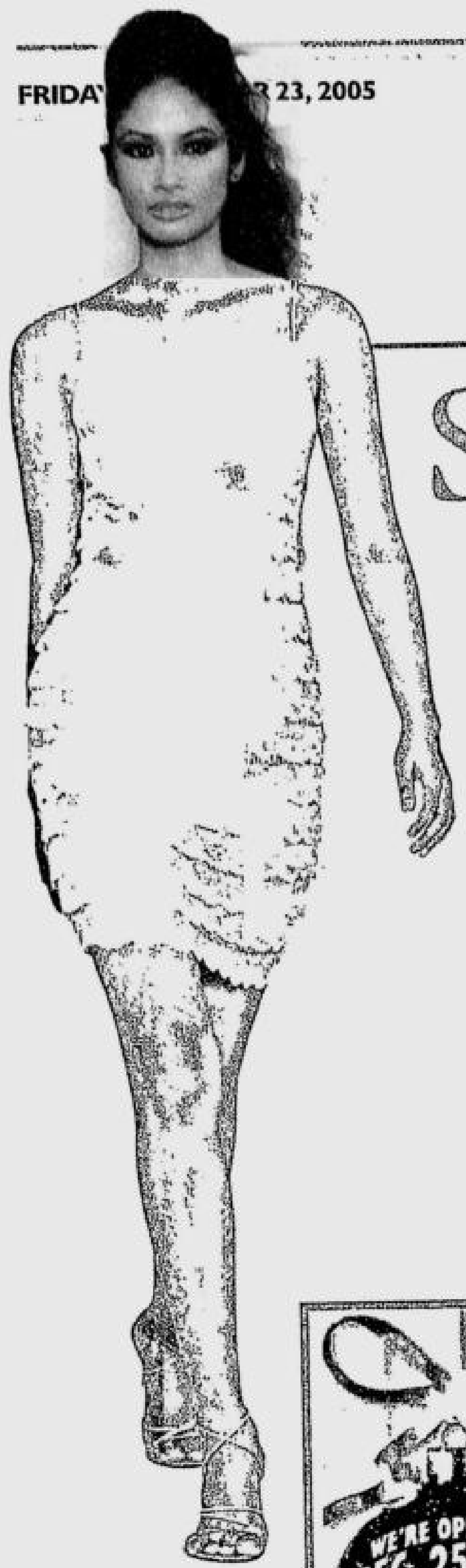
LIFESTYLE



EFREN Ocampo

PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

AUGGIE Cordero

Short cuts, volume and the return of couture

THE WORD IS OUT: shorts are back next year, with lengths that go from mid-thigh to just grazing the knee.

That was the statement sent to the runway by a lot of the designers who showed their latest collections at the Metrowear fashion show held last week at the Rockwell Tent. With its anti-hot pants attitude, and very comfortable and loose cuts, the shorts, especially those which came from Tippi Ocampo, Vic Barba and Anthony Nocom, would already be perfect for the cocktails that began and capped the rather humid November evening outside the tent.

That evening, 18 of the country's top designers presented their fashion forecasts for next year to Manila's fashion-conscious set.

Continuing the trend for a more laid-back look were the crocheted cardigans and miniskirts from Efren Ocampo, the relaxed white silhouettes with a very prim schoolgirl touch in

SHORT/ E3

My Tiangge Shopping list:

✓Dad's Watch	P 200
✓Mom's Necklace	P 100
✓Lola's Scarf	P 150
✓Lolo's Jacket	P 300
✓Kuya's Hat	P 100
✓Ate's Dress	P 250
✓My Darling's T-shirt	P 200
✓Bestfriend Lisa's bag	P150
✓Yaya's Bracelet	P 50
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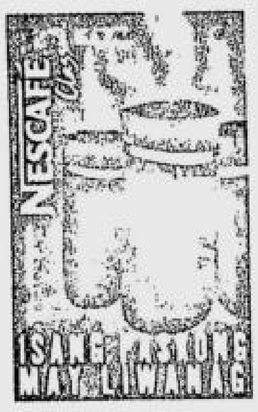

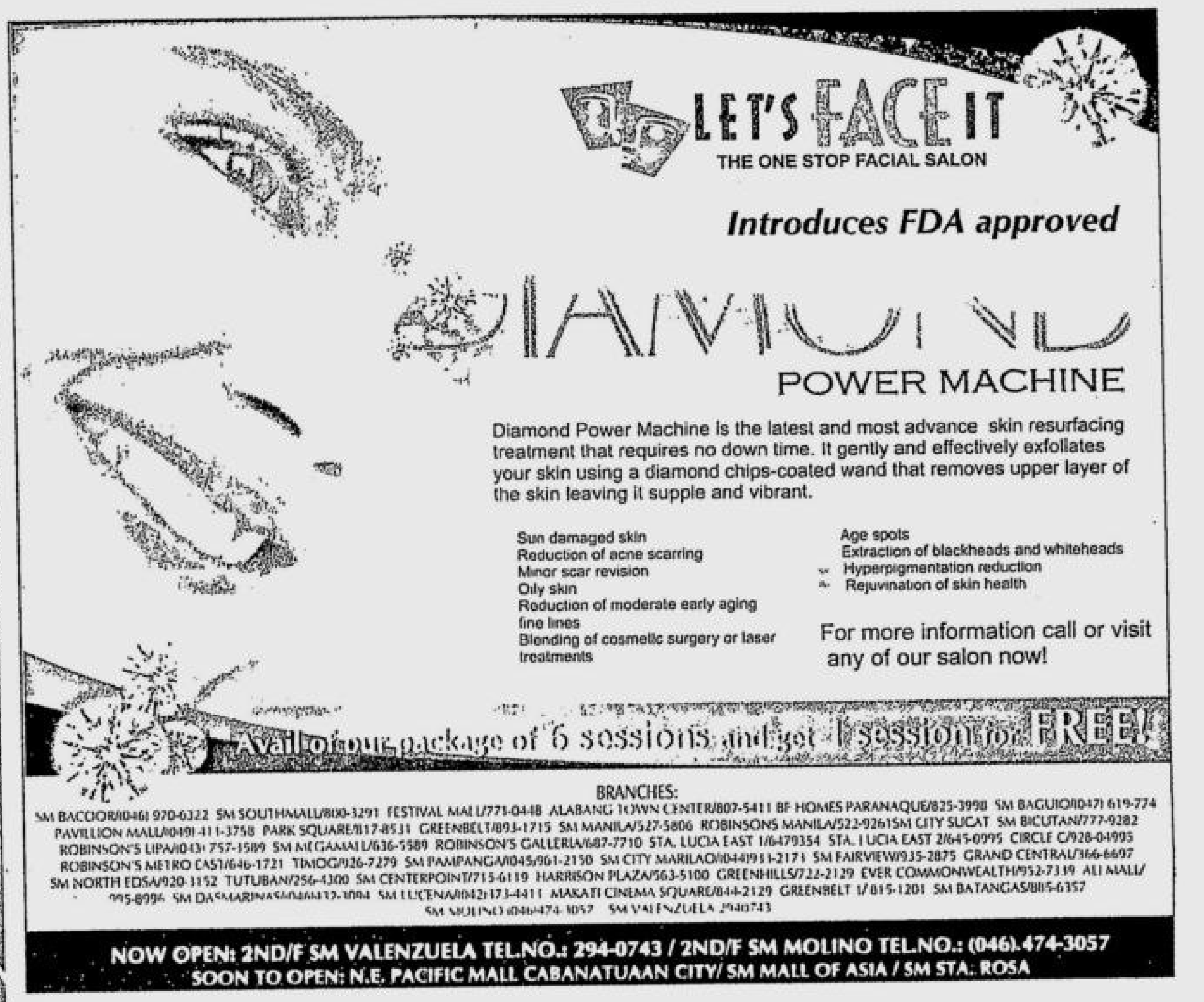
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LOUIE Y. with his happy Nuvo Bar and Resto staff

BONG Daza, southern baron Toti Cariño and northern baron Bonito Singson

POWER businessman Peng Perez de Tagle, Mia Borromeo and vivacious Vicky Perez de Tagle

LET'S PARTY! Gil Aquino, Chito Melo, Troy Escolin and Edvee Cruz

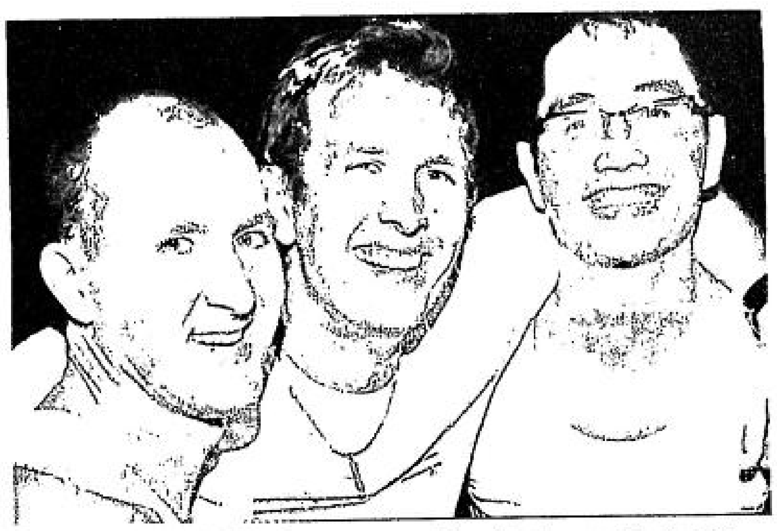
GANG OF FOUR. Tatler's Anton San Diego, glam-rock gal Vicky Fernandez Zubiri, *moi* and Pepper Teehankee

LEANA Farrales, Mary Rose Aquino and Charlie Carmona

King of night life marks milestone

TONY Garcia and Jes Medina

PEDRO Roxas and Babes Romualdez


WORLD-RENOWNED Creams owner Tony Barton, world-class DJ Gareth Wyn and Big Fish main man Domini Primero

HEY, BEAUTIFUL! Eye-catcher Carmen Feliciano and Monique Jamlang

DJ ERWIN Edralin and Paula Rosales

STYLISH achievers Norman and Astrud Crisologo

BRILLIANT hotshots. Lawyer Felipe Gozon, chair/president and CEO, GMA Network, Inc.; Joselito Campos, chair and CEO of Southeast Asia Food, Inc.; Socorro Ramos, general manager, National Bookstore; José Concepcion III, presidential consultant for entrepreneurship; Vivienne Tan, president and CEO, Splash Group of Companies; and Harley Sy, president, SM Investment Corp.

ATTRACTIVE Gina Bello, hostess Cecille Chang Y., birthday boy Louie Ysmael, adorable Letty Tan and stunning Ching Cruz

BODY BEAUTIFUL Cory Quirino superbly hosts the affair.

SUSAN Laudico

PRETTY as a picture Danica Coronel and mother, Cinderella's attractive Grace Reyes Coronel; young main man Richie Santos and GNC's main woman Mary Anne Borromeo; and Cinderella's working heiress Marielle C. Santos

LILIAN Cham Sam Ko, Cinderella's woman of substance Therese C. Santos, and popular couturier Bobby Novenario

WARNER Manning, HSBC CEO, listens as Marixi Prieto, INQUIRER chair, gives her insights on young entrepreneurship.

WITHOUT BATTING AN EYELASH

Maurice Arcache

Photos by Alex Van Hagen using **Kodak** EasyShare system

THE KING OF THE NIGHT LIFE, LOUIE **Ysmael**, added another year to a dazzling life, *palanggas*. He celebrated his birthday with the usual style and flair at Nuvo, together with, in his words, "true and close friends."

With his gorgeous wife, **Cecille Chang**, Louie did a fab job organizing the party. They had no less than in-demand interior designer, **Cynthia Almario**, doing the eye-catching table setting.

Nuvo's brilliant chef, Rod Sapio, prepared an excellent menu, whose *piece de resistance* was a nine-kilo slab of the most magnificent black Angus roast beef which all agreed was "one of the best" they had ever tasted. *Moi* stuck to my all-time favorite, the superb sea bass, natch!

With the bubbly champagne and the excellent California wine flowing all night, everyone, needless to say, was in high spirits, dahlings.

Aprés a hilarious toast of the bubbly led by Louie Y's close pals, **Bong Daza**, and Bukidnon Gov. **Joe Zubiri**, businessman **Al Tengco** brought the house down by leading us all with his trademark happy birthday rendition, in five languages!

Present were vivacious woman of substance **Letty Tan**, on a rare night out; Vigan hotshot **Bonito Singsong**; gorgeous **Yuri Singsong**; **Bebot Bello**; **Carol Masibay-Garcia**, who came in latish; **Jess Medina**; **James Chua**; southern baron **Toti Cariño**; **Troy Escolin**; **Charlie Carmona** and nice **Leana Farrales**; **Mia Borromeo** and her steady escort, the suave **Rante Aguila**; **Conkoy Tuason** and his fashionable wife, jeweler **Doody Menchaca T.**; fun **Gil Aquino** and gorgeous **Mary Rose Aquino**; and other beautiful people.

With a fun get-together like this, everyone was on a roll. But then, that was partying, Louie Y-style, *n'est ce pas*! (as in, *di bala!*)

Bigfish

The hip partying pack choked the streets around the Philippine Trade Training Center for the biggest happening of the week, hosted by the country's leading dance events promoter, the Bigfish, natch. The event was Addict Mobile's "Come to the Costume Ball."

Night crawlers rocked and rolled beneath the laser lights till 5 a.m., *palanggas*. DJ **Erwin Edralin** of Team Bigfish did an awesome job of warming up the mob. Later, Cream DJ **Gareth Wyn** took over and sustained the energy.

All three halls of the Philippine Trade Training Center were utilized for this fab happening, *palanggas*. Bigfish broke its record, as over 5,000 individuals came in eye-catching costumes. Cream owner and world traveler, **Tony Barton**, called it "one of the best Cream dance events in the world." The event utilized Martin Audio London for its sound system, which is used in key dance events abroad.

Leading the mob of rockers were the Bigfish main man and world-class events maker, **Domini Primero**, with statuesque wife, **Josa Quintas Primero**; and hotshot partner, **Pixie Cheah**, with the new man in her life, nice **Ricky Daker**.

Also there were newlyweds **JP** and **Hilary Favila-Bautista**; Folded & Hung hot young owners, **Ronald Pineda** and **Alan Vianson**; actor **Rustom Padilla**; **JR Isaac**; Team Bigfish DJ **Benjo Marquez** with his sister, **Laica**; and Smart Communication's **Jon-Jon San Agustin** with wife, **Tisha**.

At British India

The chic crowd of elegant women mixed and matched British India's latest cool collection at the lounge of the Podium mall. We were welcomed by the impressive soothing sounds of smooth jazz by 21-year-old pianist **Angelo Ortiz**.

The guests then checked out the paintings on exhibit by the likes of National Artists **Carlos Botong Francisco** and **José Joya**. The paintings were from the private collection of veteran columnist and art collector, our *palangga*, **Gilbert Perez**.

But the big come-on was the fab fashion show featuring the Fall 2005 collection of British India. Women and men of style and achievement were the models.

Later, there were awesome raffles from Credit Card Bankard, Canon Camera, Nutrafit, Esprit and British India.

Then it was time to shop as British India gave a cool 20-percent discount on all items that day. The gals grabbed the offer faster than you could bat an eyelash.

Among those who enjoyed the affair were First Secretary **Vu Tien Trong** of the Embassy of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Century Canning's **Leo Po**, Superfly's **Karl Ty**, and GNC health shop's **Mary Anne Borromeo**.

Entrepreneurship

At the Manila Polo Club, the Philippine Center for Entrepreneurship (PCE) held a forum on entrepreneurship and education: "Investing In Young Minds Now." It was fab seeing students and educators attending this forum.

The brainchild of Presidential Consultant for Entrepreneurship **José Concepcion III**, the forum featured current learning models for children to learn entrepreneurship early on.

Giving their testimonials were Dr. **Rolando Hortaleza** of Splash Corp.; **Socorro Ramos** of National Bookstore; **Chit Juan** of Figaro Coffee Company and **Henry Lim Bon Liong** of Sterling Group of Companies.

Sharing their insights on entrepreneurship education were Acting Education Secretary **Fe Hidalgo**; **Angelita Resurreccion**, president of the Competency Based Economies through Formation of Entrepreneurs; and **Genevieve Ledesma-Tan**, president of Southville International School & Colleges.

And once the loud applause and congratulations were given to the speakers, no less than President **Macapagal-Arroyo** gave an inspiring talk on the need for entrepreneurship education in our country, *palanggas*.

Merry Christmas!

TIPPI Ocampo

PHOTOS BY JIM GUIAO PUNZALAN

Short cuts, volume . . .

From page E1

the white dresses of Jojie Lloren, the pastel color-blocks in jersey from Oj Hofer, and the fabric-rich, Pucci-inspired print floor-length dresses of Mike dela Rosa.

Evening wear walked the thin line between high glamour and laid-back luxury in the collections of Jun Escario (flimsy bubble dresses with '20s-inspired beadwork), Cesar Gaupo (volume dresses with bubble sleeves, metallic colors in satin), Rhett Eala (black corset top with dramatic black ruffled shrug), JC Buendia (relaxed suits in serious black) and Dennis Lustico (bold-colored slim dresses with ruffles and very sleek see-through neckline and sleeves).

While ruffles and pleats turned up in breezy evening dresses from Philip Rodriguez, palazzo pants were topped with ethnic-inspired sequined chiffon capelets from Rajo Laurel.

But the real big news came from Auggie Cordero. It was refreshing to see great couture back on the runway. His gowns seemed straight out of a Jane Austen novel, but darker and more glamorous. Auggie's palette largely concentrated on black with a hint of gold just quietly peeking from beneath illusion tulle delicately embroidered with dots.

The gold was, in truth, silk lame, and the gowns' skirts were made of silk chiffon-fabrics you don't come across in today's ateliers because they're a little too expensive and practically out of the Manila market. Multicolored crystals glimmered on the bodice.

Cordero's collection was the perfect capper for the evening, a discreet reminder to all that in the end it all boiled down to beautifully cut dresses any woman would dream of wearing.

This illustrious list of designers, which also included Lulu Tan-Gan (an ingenious idea of an empire-cut bubble dress in knits), Arcy Gayatin, Randy Ortiz (an interesting cocktail of textures and colors in one very summery outfit), and Frederick Peralta (a mix of dot appliqués in checked fabrics), could only have been gathered by Metro Magazine, the country's biggest fashion and lifestyle title, and the organizer of Metrowear.

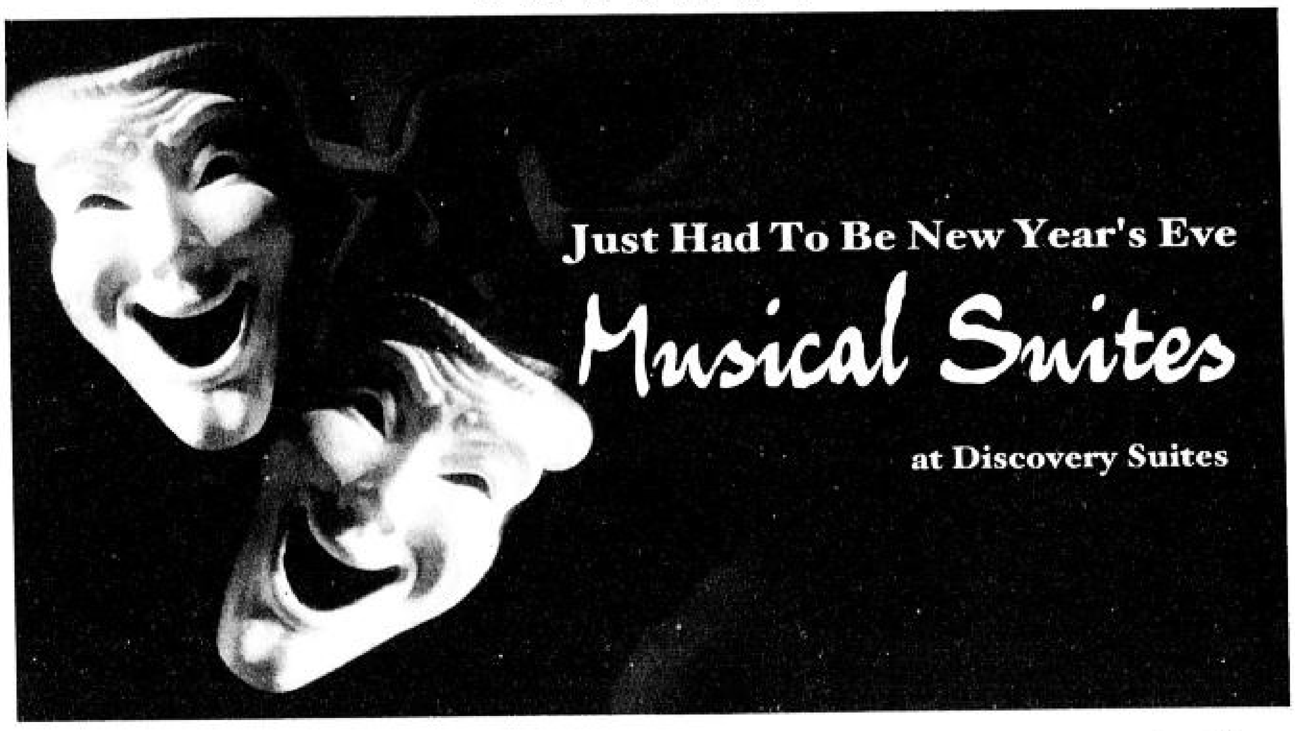
Now on its fourth year, Metrowear has become one of the most anticipated to-dos on the fashion cognoscenti's calendar, because it showcases the latest works of the country's foremost designers.

Metrowear is presented by Metro Magazine with Samsung, L'Oreal and Lancôme, with additional support from HSBC, the Lifestyle Network, Studio 23 and ANC.

DENNIS Lustico

MIKE dela Rosa

RANDY Ortiz (left) and Cesar Gaupo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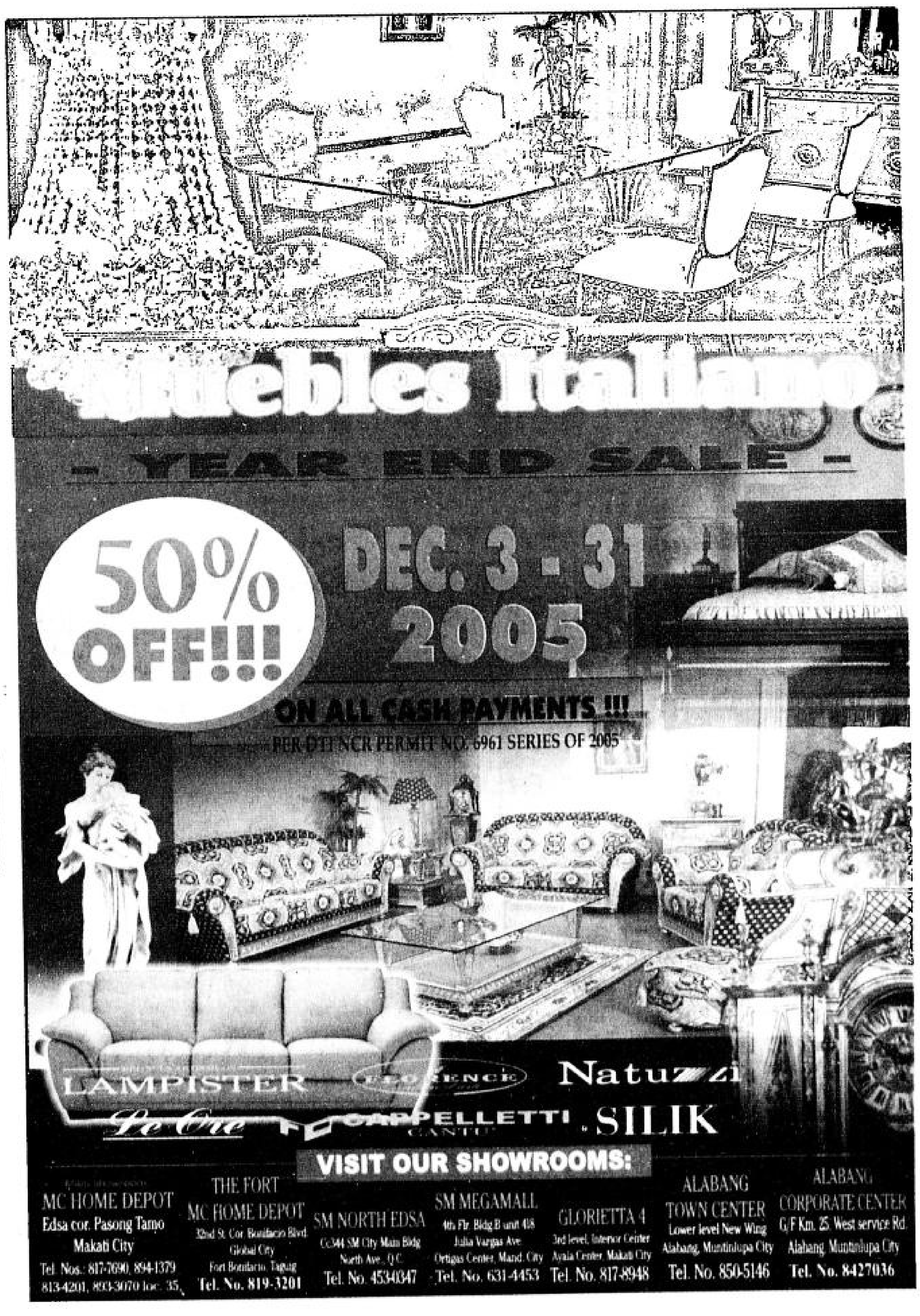
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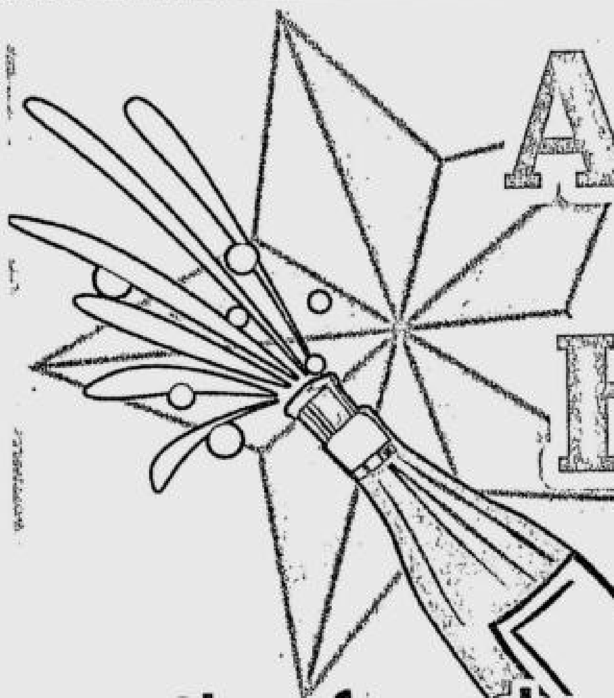

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- Berkeley Square, Commonwealth

Per DTI-Permit No. 4000 Series of 2005.

LIFESTYLE

Contributing Editor Ria Francisco-Prieto
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BEAUTY
season's highlights

Festive looks *p. F2*

Hair to stay *p. F2*

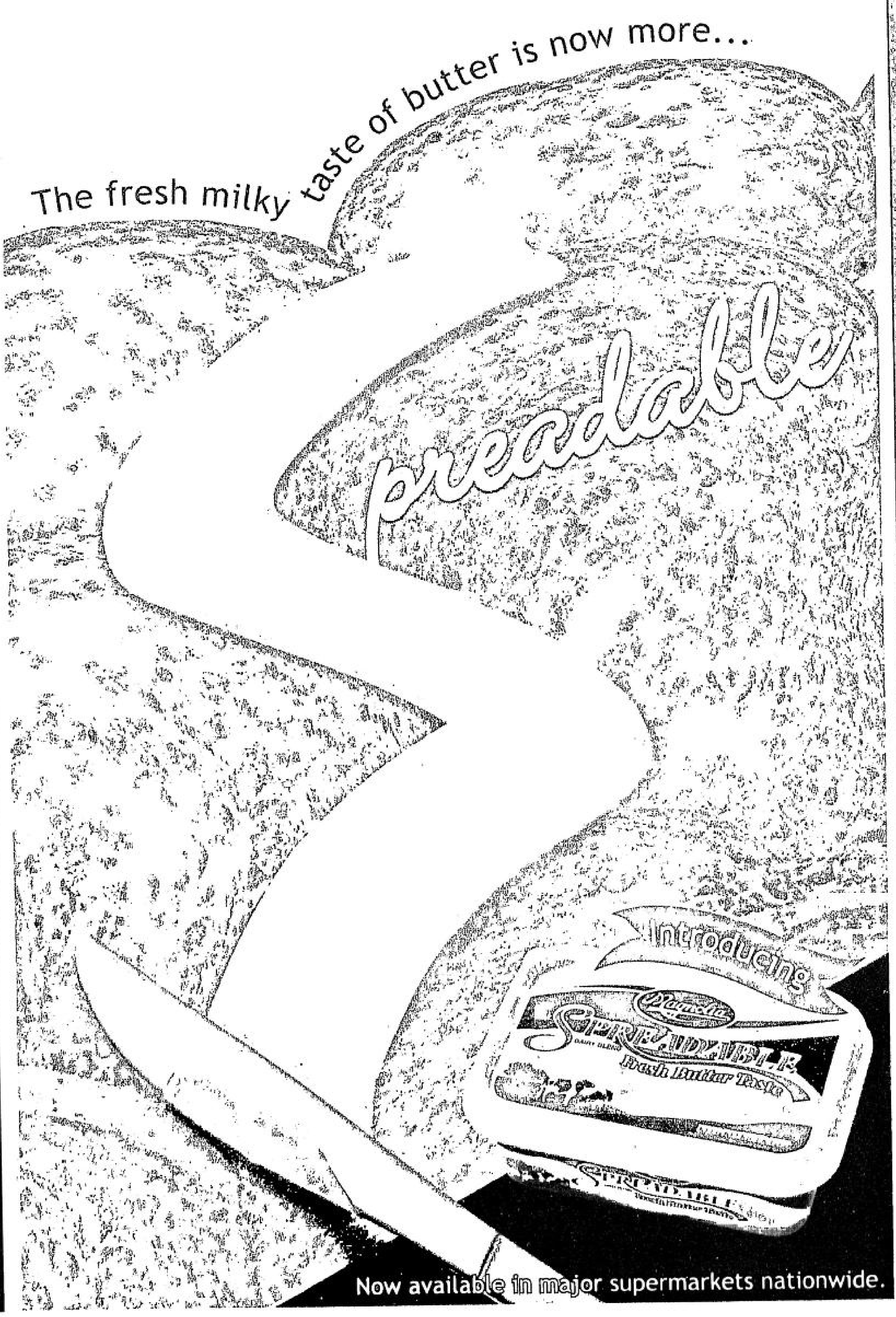
Gift trends *p. F3*

All I want for Christmas is...

Lipo!
—Kat Cruz
(Just Shop fashion associate)

Lipo also!
—Jenni Epperson
(Just Shop editor)

A free trip to Mandala spa with my girlfriend
—L.A. Mistades
(graphic artist)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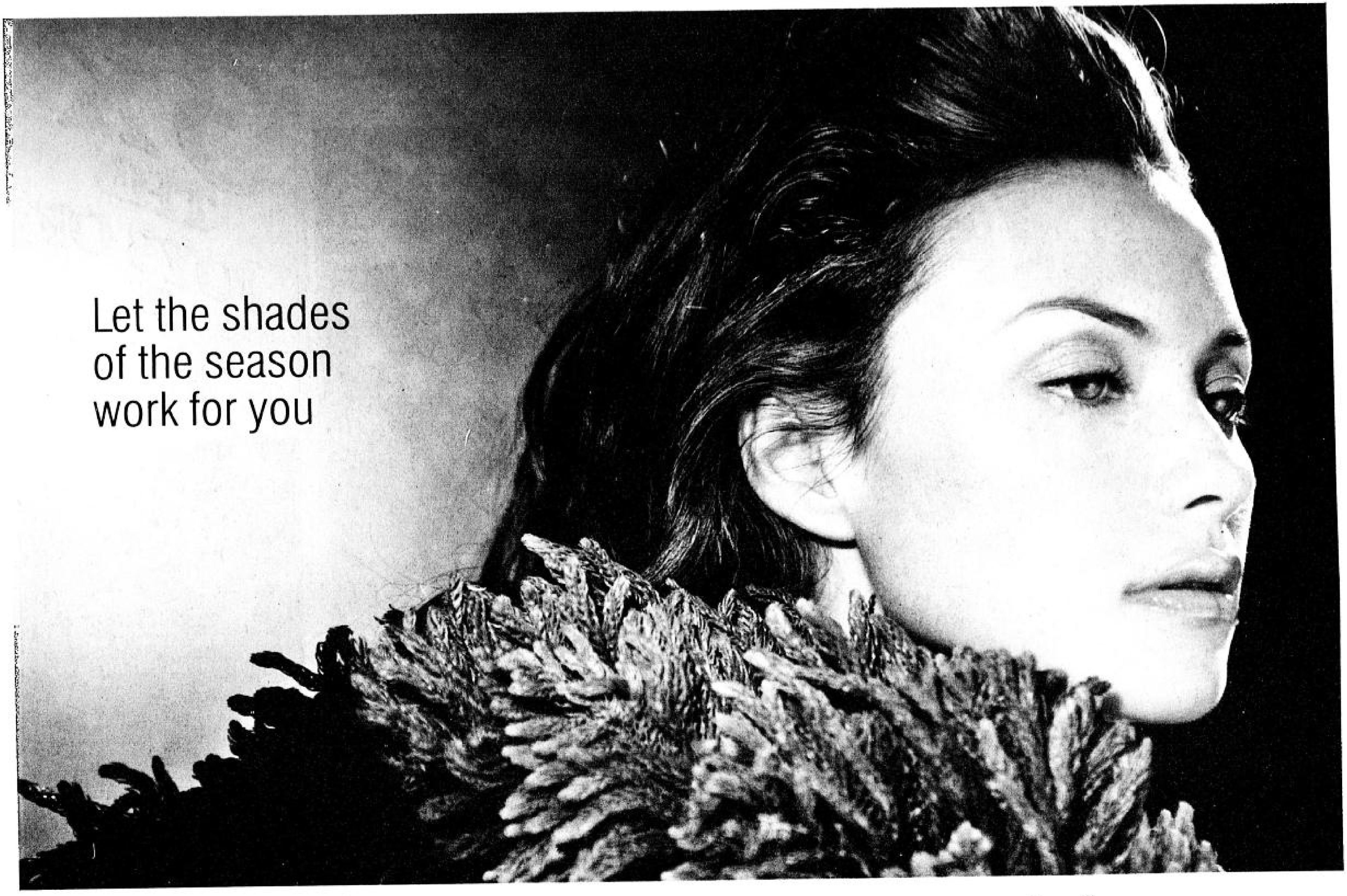


Let the shades of the season work for you

SHINE with the help of silver.

Christmas countdown

KNOCKOUT!

Ria Francisco-Prieto

IT'S CHRISTMAS! Whether walking around the mall, in the car or even at home, I am surrounded by the colors green, red and silver.

The festivity of the season is actually rubbing off on me that I wake up excited about what dinners and parties are scheduled that day in my planner. I think of the outfits I have, and then I get nervous. So many events, so few outfits! What's a girl to do?

Oh well, of course I know what to do (because I always do it). I mix and match! Yay! I figure I can't wear a new outfit all the time, plus I'm really not into spending much, so I make do and make my creativeness go to work.

The more ingenious I get in mixing and matching, the more money I can keep. That formula works well with me. I'm happy again and not a nervous wreck.

Fun! This is a season of absolute fun! The palette of this season is also truly as festive! Makes me think of makeup, actually. And what better time then now to play with color? Like I said, we do have a lot of parties to go to and dressing up to do.

Christmas jingles play in my head: "Rudolph The Red Nosed Reindeer"... So let's talk about the color red. Okay, not on your nose, of course. But red is a color that will always be celebrated. Red lips evoke class. Think Audrey Hepburn.

If all you have time for is to swipe on your fave red lipstick, so be it! Besides, I believe that when putting on makeup, less is always more. You don't want to look like Mrs. Claus (God bless her soul), but you want to look fresh like a Christmas fairy.

Still, fresh and sweet—and hot? Keep in mind that red is a strong statement, so whether you use it on your lips or cheeks, try to complement it with a subdued shade.

Silver overload

"Silver bells, silver bells..."

The color silver, from Christmas balls to trimmings, will work well on your eyes, too! No, it won't make for a silver overload. If you have to rush to a party, just line your eyes with silver pencil and you may hop in the car and do the rest there.

If you don't have silver eye pencil, use silver eyeshadow to do the trick. Get an eyeliner brush to line your eyes, and if you also don't have this, then a cotton swab will do.

When I use a cotton swab, I like to start from the outer layer of my eyes going in. Remember, you don't have to outline your eyes. The line works better if it is fading. You may use this also on your lids. Remember, out going in. Finish your eyes by curling your lashes, then adding on a coat of mascara to open up your eyes. Practice, practice, practice!

"Oh Christmas tree..."

I just got my first-ever Christmas tree as a married woman. It automatically brightened the house. I love it!

Green is one color that I know will forever be a part of my eyeshadow palette. There are different shades of green and there is one that will definitely suit your skin tone. It's pretty easy with green. The fairer you are, the lighter the green shade that will suit you, and the darker you are, the darker you may go.

Of course, if you want a natural look, then go for lighter shades. If you prefer a more dramatic look, then use darker greens. When it comes to lipstick, because of your eyeshadow, opt for nude or berry tones.

I've noticed that red lips don't really go with green eyeshadows as well as nude tones do. But the best judge of that is you.

Have fun with makeup and try what you think will suit you. What won't work for others may work nicely on you!

Have a ball while getting ready, and enjoy the parties in style. Merry Christmas to you and your family! God bless!

Photography Mark Nicdao
for Edge of Light
Makeup
Steven Doloso 0916-3748046
Hair
Barney Aguilar 0915-9007884
Styling Ria Francisco-Prieto

cut & keep

Best cut, curl and coil

Whorls and waves make the hair

How to: Curl your hair

If you have straight hair and you want it to look curly, there are many things you can do to achieve the desired effect. An easy option is to go to your hairdresser and get your hair professionally permed. But this effect is permanent and is probably too drastic for most. It's easy to curl up your hair by yourself at home. The effect can look just as good. Here are easy steps to try:

E-mail me at rbeauty@inquirer.com.ph

Step 1

Begin with clean, damp hair. Apply a small amount of a good quality mouse or gel on your hair. You may even use a curl-enhancing styling product depending on the type of curled effect you want to achieve.

Step 2

Start with the tip of your hair working your way up to the top. Using a curling iron, twist a section of your hair, open the curling iron and insert your hair then close it evenly at the ends. Roll the iron up and hold it for about five to 10 seconds. Open the curling iron and release the curl. Continue with the other sections of the hair.

Step 3

Try to bunch the hair in handfuls and loosen the curls with your fingers. Shake it out then voila you've got the easiest instant curls ever!

PHOTOGRAPHY PAOLO PINEDA (0918-9375490)
MAKEUP MARGE ENRIQUE (0917-9009739)
STYLING MINELLI BAUTISTA
MODEL VALERIE DE LOS SANTOS (PMAP)

Sneak peek at presents

WAITING FOR CHRISTMAS morning to open my presents was never my style. Even as a child I would sneak by the Christmas tree and pry the tape attached to the wrapper to see what I got. Well, here I am 20-plus years later and things have not changed. I have opened all the presents under the tree and have even road-tested some of them.

MAKEOVER 911

Kinny Salas

Let us start with the cosmetic closest to my heart—lipstick.

If you intend on standing under several mistletoes to pucker up with that special someone, beware that the texture of lip glosses in tubes may be too sticky for most guys.

L'Oreal's Glam Shine Crème (P549) and Maybelline's Moisture Extreme lip color (P449) are lip glosses solidified in stick form but practically melt as they come in contact with your lips, gliding smoothly and depositing rich pigment evenly. It's wonderful that they last longer than the usual gloss and the color fades evenly as well.

I tried Glam Shine in 403, Glam Red (an orangey red with gold shimmer), and Moisture Extreme in Loving Red (a plummy red tone in rich cream form; no shimmer). I preferred the Maybelline shade, texture-wise.

Tools of the trade

Shu Uemura's brushes are my hands-down most valuable beauty gift this year. Shu's brushes are a favorite of makeup artists worldwide. They are made of natural animal hair like sable, kolinski and pony.

The color pigments of the cosmetics adhere to the brush, but application is controlled so you get a rich deposit a color without the mess. Scrimp on eye shadow and blush, but invest in the brushes.

If you take care of them they will last you a long time. I have Shu brushes that are 16 years old and still look good as new and are a long way from retirement.

Spreading the smell of cheer

Clinique's Happy fragrance is a consistent best seller in this citrus- and fresh-scented country. I pretty much ignore the rest of the line, though.

I ripped open a box which contained Happy shampoo, conditioner and body butter. I took a shower and used all three products without the actual fragrance and met my friends. Children gravitated toward me and told me I smelled really great. It really is called Happy for a reason as it put a smile on everyone's face when they caught a whiff of my scent.

The body cream lasts the whole day and smells very fresh. The shampoo and conditioner are called Classic Happy while the Body Butter is called Happy Heart as well. Classic Happy smells like oranges and lemon while Happy Heart has a strong sweet note of cantaloupe.

Dark under-eye circles

With the dawn Mass novenas from Dec. 16-24, your regular work schedule and Christmas socials, your eyes don't stand a chance! Everyone I know has varying degrees of raccoon eyes and has been crying to me about it.

There are only two eye creams that are locally available that work.

Cernor Vitamin K eye cream is a favorite and well-guarded secret among show-biz personalities who have notoriously late work hours. Available at Dr. Vicki Belo, who uses it herself. Call 8442939 for inquiries.

There's also Biorica Anti-Age Eye Contour Serum, which has Hirudin as an active ingredient. Hirudin is saliva from a special kind of fresh water leech that improves skin's microcirculation. This is available at Essenses, Rustan's.

Shu Uemura and Clinique are available at Rustan's Department Stores Makati and Mandaluyong.

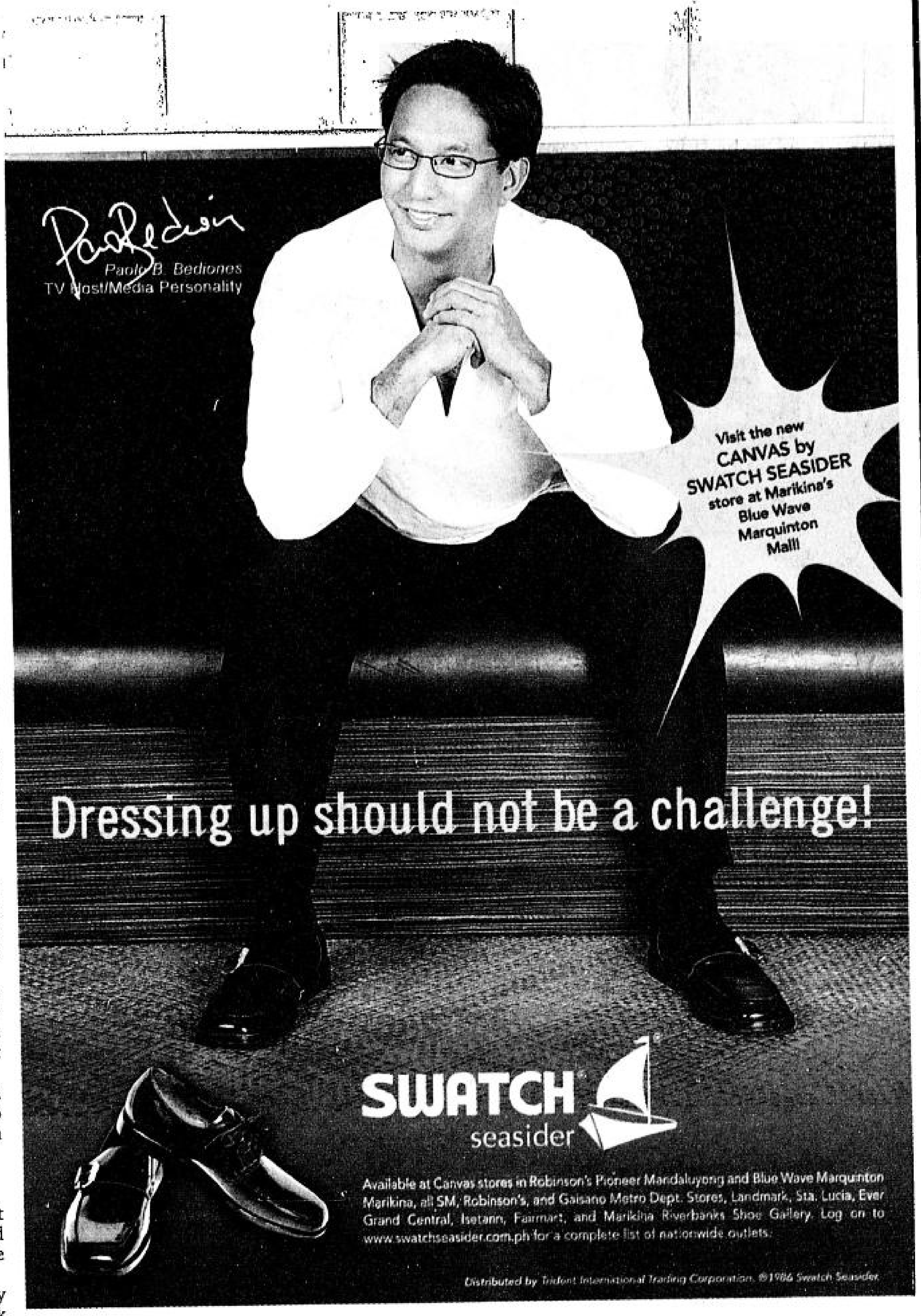
E-mail the author at kinnysalas@yahoo.com

Glam Shine
Glam Shine

L'OREAL'S Glam Shine Crème

clinique happy heart.
BODY BUTTER

CLINIQUE Body Butter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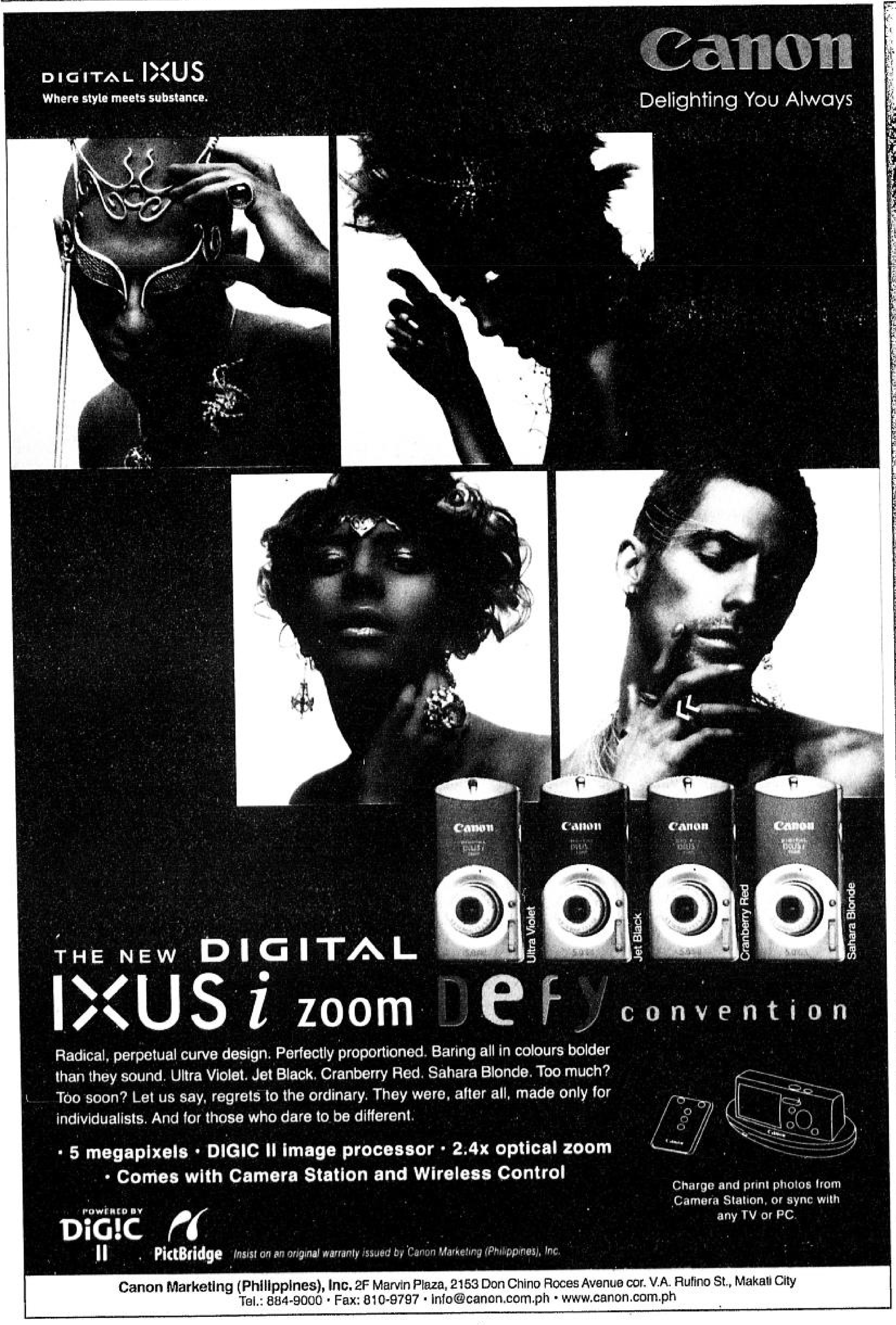

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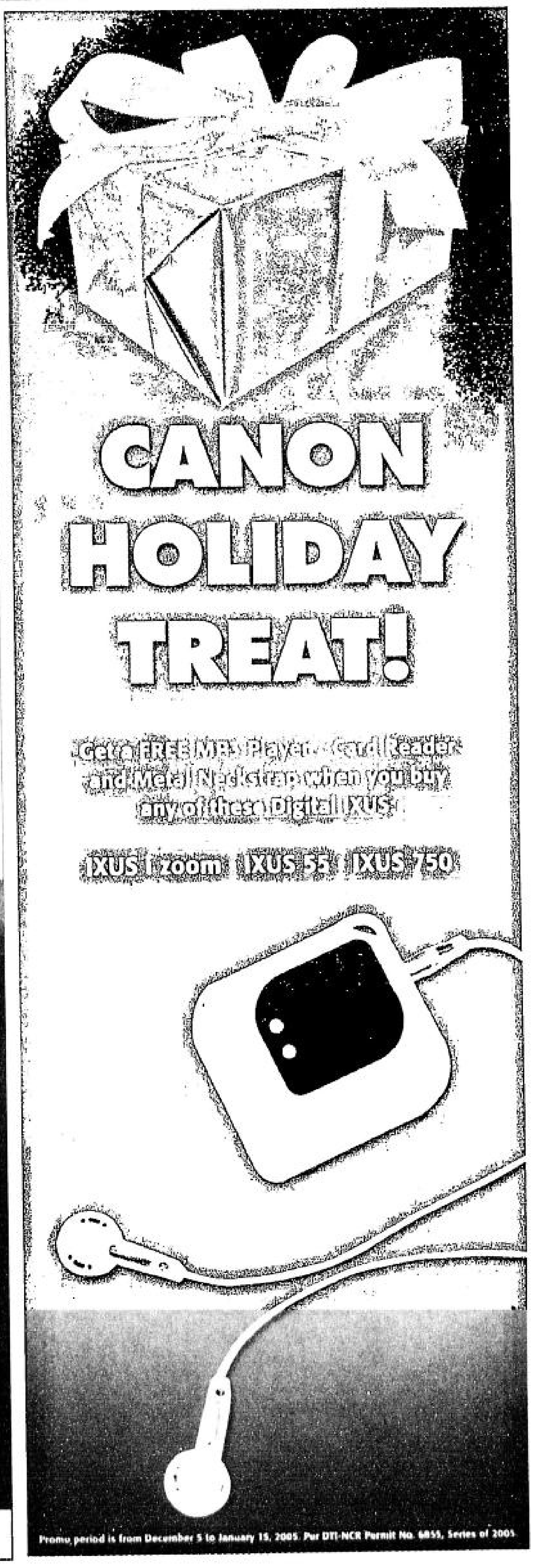

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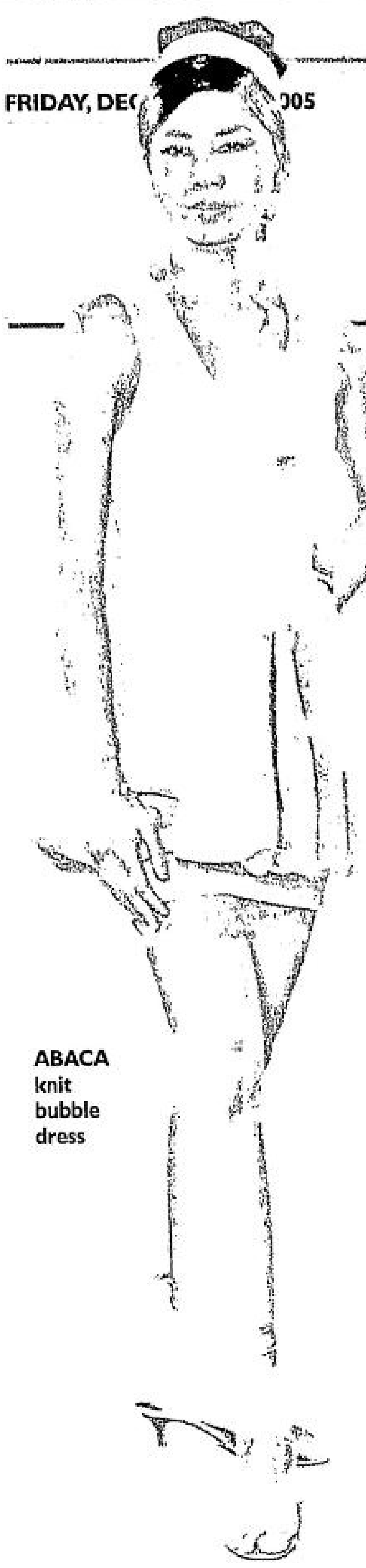

ABACA knit bubble dress

LACED and sequined knit tunic over pants

Summer nights in December

LULU TAN GAN'S MOST recent fashion show opened with graphic kaftans, long ponchos and hanging capes done in stripes of steel, white and lemon. The pieces draped loosely over the body, giving off that easy-going vacation vibe. Paired with knit lounge pants or little shorts for the show, the silhouettes evoked perfect swimsuit cover-ups.

The cool, crisp evening air of nights by the sea brings a feminine softness to knitwear, as shown in the collection. Done in gelato colors of *ube* and mint and the natural hues of sky blue and metal, the fabric was blended with wisps of silver glit and delicate lace. Figure-skimming dresses with deep necklines or pretty halters highlighted lovely shoulders and legs. Bubble tops and dresses lent fancy silhouettes to evening trysts.

The third set, Nefertiti-inspired, was a lovely salutation to the deep purples of exotic tiles, golden sand and the setting sun. Striped tunics with glit were cinched with a sash or left loose and comfy over cropped pants and shorts. Harem-style shorts and jodhpurs brought an Arabian flavor, paired with loose capelets and twisted bandeaus.

The show ended with beautiful and innovative *abaca*-knit bubble dresses and gowns. Empire-cut and poofed skirts created ultra-feminine silhouettes. Necklines were pleated in accents of mango to resemble the over-sized necklaces of Queen Nefertiti of Egypt.

Tan-Gan will be available at Tan-Gan boutiques in the following shopping malls: SM Megamall, SM City North Edsa (Annex), SM City Manila and Festival Supermall. E-mail tan-gan@tan-gan.com, lulutangan@yahoo.com or call 753 2655.

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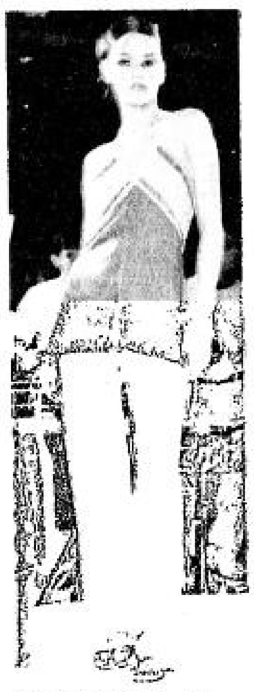
GILDED asymmetric tunic over pants

GILDED capelet and harem pants over purple tube

SPAGHETTI-STRAP abaca knit knee-length bubble dress



HALTERED backless tunic over pants

HALTERED bubble pinstriped dress

GILDED capelet and skorts over striped tube

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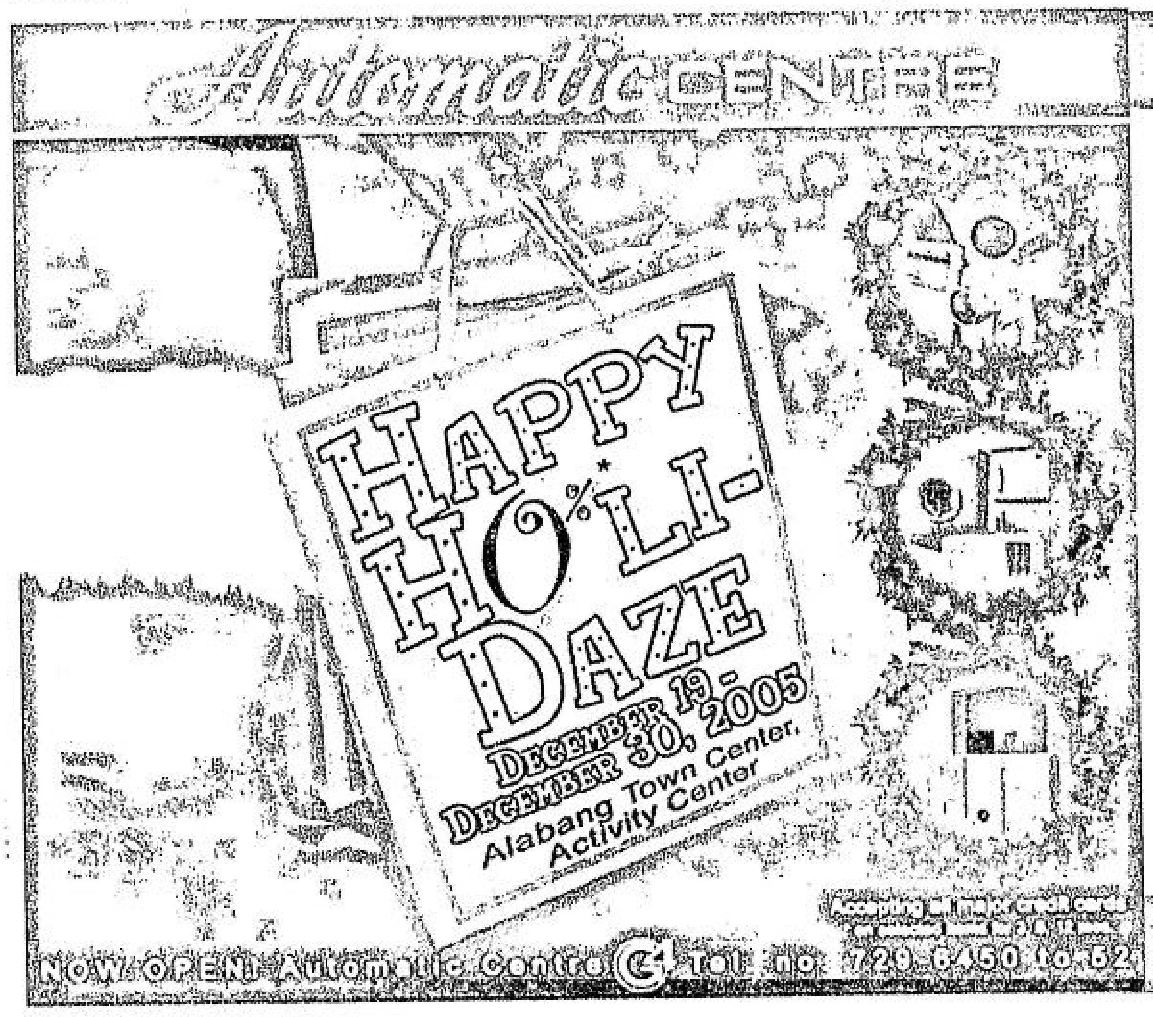
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More shopping with Automatic Centre's Happy Holi-Daze

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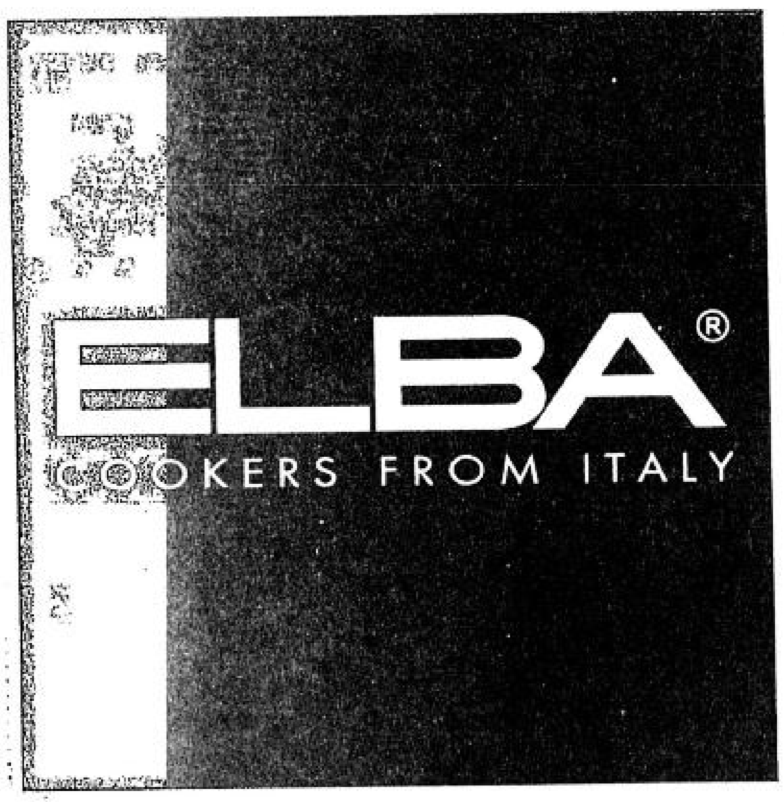
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COOKERS FROM ITALY

Beat the rush with last-minute shopping this Christmas season. Don't feel left out with people buying stuff for themselves and for gifts to friends and families.

Automatic Centre ends this year the way it started: showering its customers with wide choices and ease of buying.

Automatic Centre's Happy Holi-Daze exhibit is the second part of its Christmas exhibit-the first one held early this month-that aims to offer the best appliance shopping deals this season. It will run until Dec. 30 at the Alabang Town Centre's Activity Centre.

To keep up with consumers who had just gotten their bonuses later in the month, the leading appliance store decided to launch a second Christmas exhibit. "We noticed that holiday shopping has started much later in the month of December," said Geoffrey Lim, general manager of Automatic Centre, "So we make it easy for the last-minute shoppers to buy their much needed gifts."

Participating brands for Automatic Centre's Happy Holi-Daze are Panasonic, Sony, Pioneer, LG, JVC, Sharp, Kolin, Syntax, Toshiba, Hitachi, NextBase, Audiovox, iPod, Kodak, Elba, La Germania, Whirlpool, Carrier, Condura, Electrolux, White Westinghouse, and Kelvinator.

Choose from a wide selection of appliances from televisions, home theaters, DVD players, mini-components, cameras, and other cool gadgets. The exhibit also showcases the so-called white-line products.

This exhibit also offers 0% interest on all major credit cards available on most products, with terms extending up to 24 months.

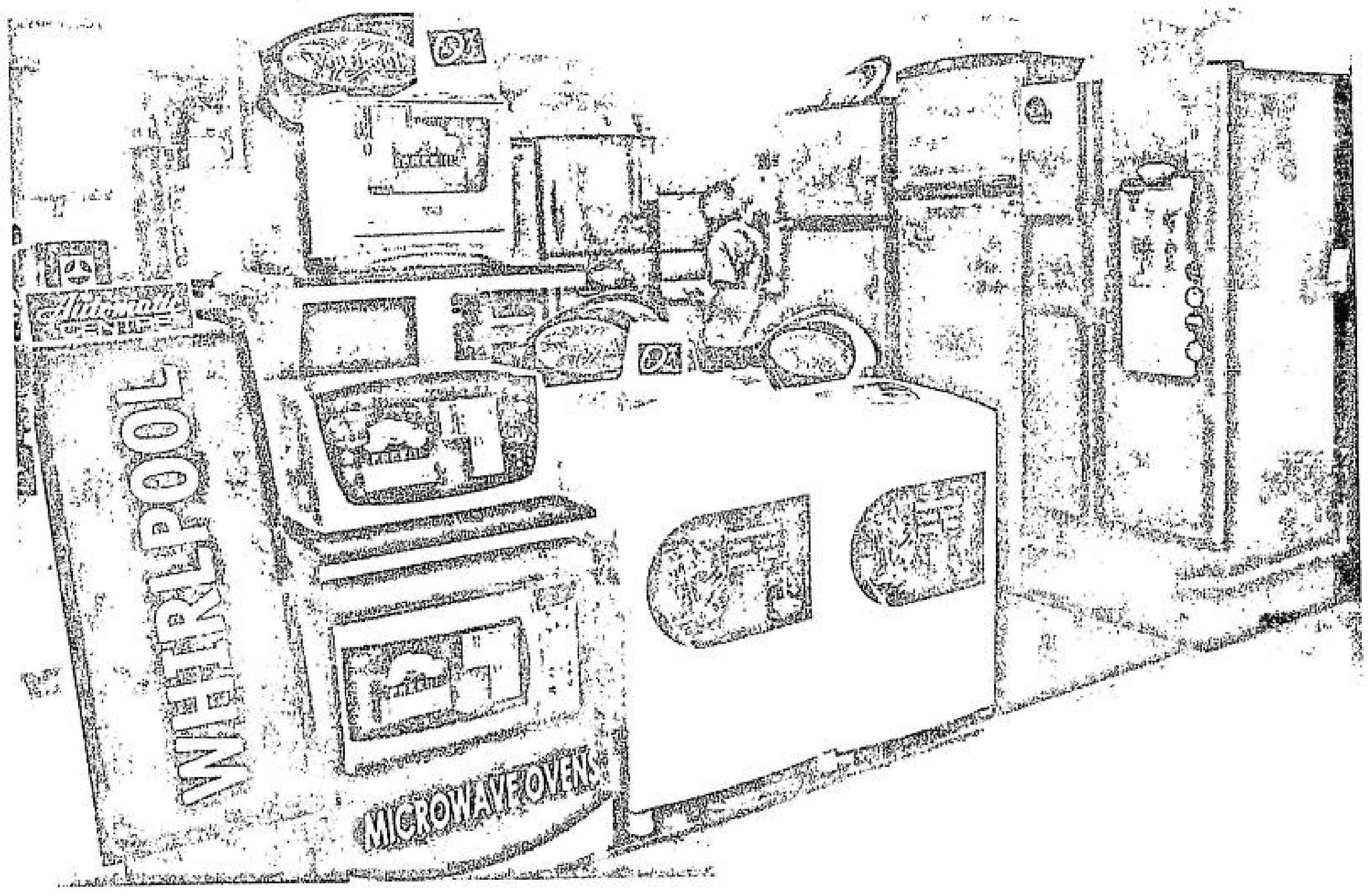
Other brands offer freebies for valued customers.

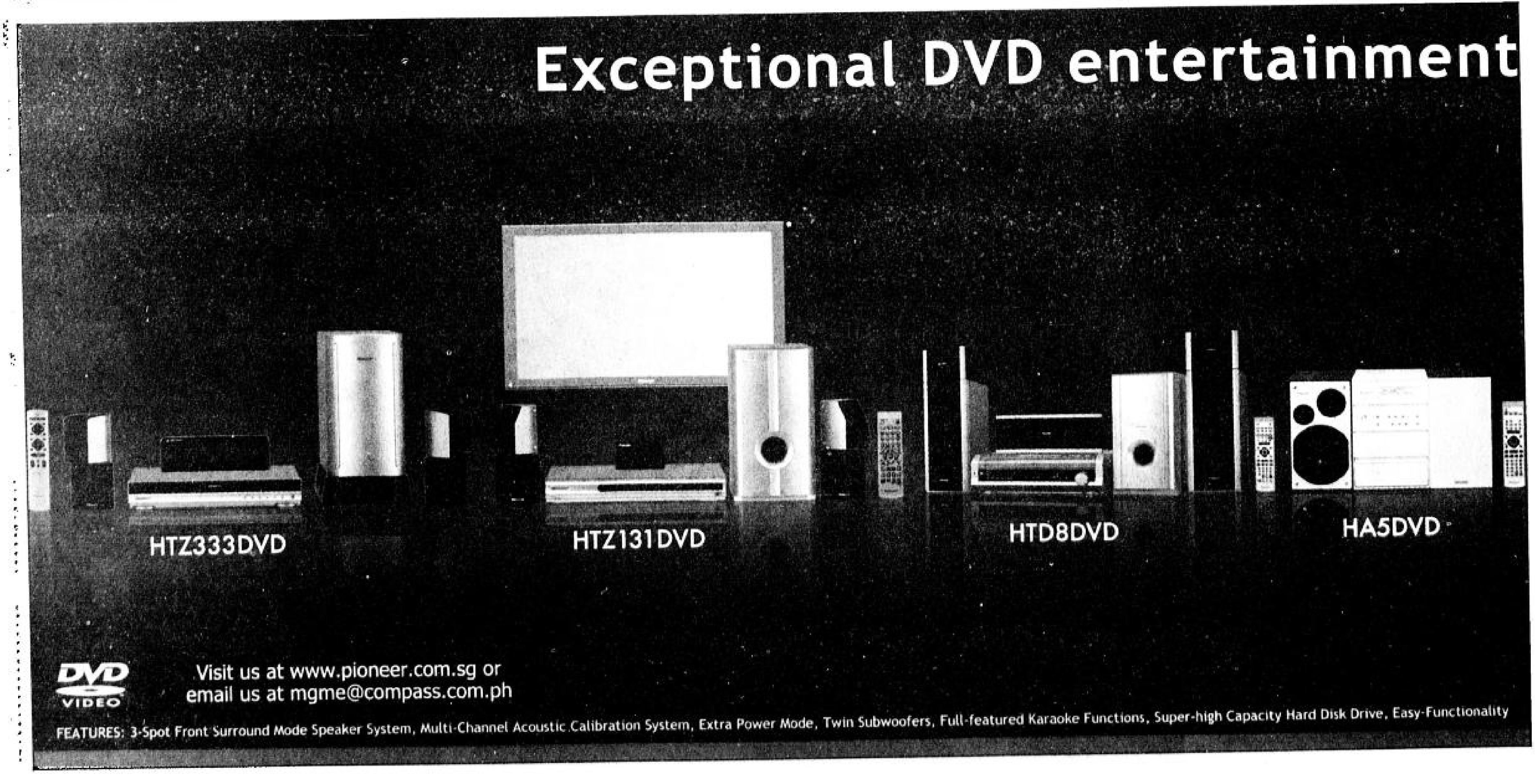
Home appliances are getting in-demand these days with the latest innovations in technology for ease of use. And people want to constantly upgrade and buy new ones.

"With this development, we want to be there for the consumers to offer them great deals," Lim said.

Exhibits like this that Automatic Centre regularly holds support the stores by expanding the availability of various products that

AUTOMATIC/ G3

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More shopping with Automatic Centre's . . .

From page G2

existing stores are unable to display.

"We are limited in the space we have in-store," Lim said, "So when we get the chance to have an exhibit the extra space allows us to displace more of the products that are available to customers."

Lim also said that customers are still very "sensual" in terms of buying appliances and electronics. "They want to be able to see, feel, and touch the products that they specifically want to take home," he said.

Automatic Centre's exhibit extends the reach of our store by allowing us to display more of the products that are available to the market.

This year, Automatic Centre held a roadshow of appliances in various malls to be able to reach out to its costumers. It gave the opportunity for them to be creative with the marketing and able to educate consumers on the latest technologies and products that are available in the market.

"Though customers may not necessarily buy those products at that exact moment," said Lim, "it is an opportunity to share with them the benefits of these items and hopefully when they decide to make the purchase, they remember Automatic Centre for not hard selling them but for informing and educating them about the features of products that would make their lives easier."

This year, Automatic Centre held a roadshow of appliances in various malls to be able to reach out to its costumers. It gave the opportunity for them to be creative with the marketing and able to educate consumers on the latest technologies and products that are available in the market

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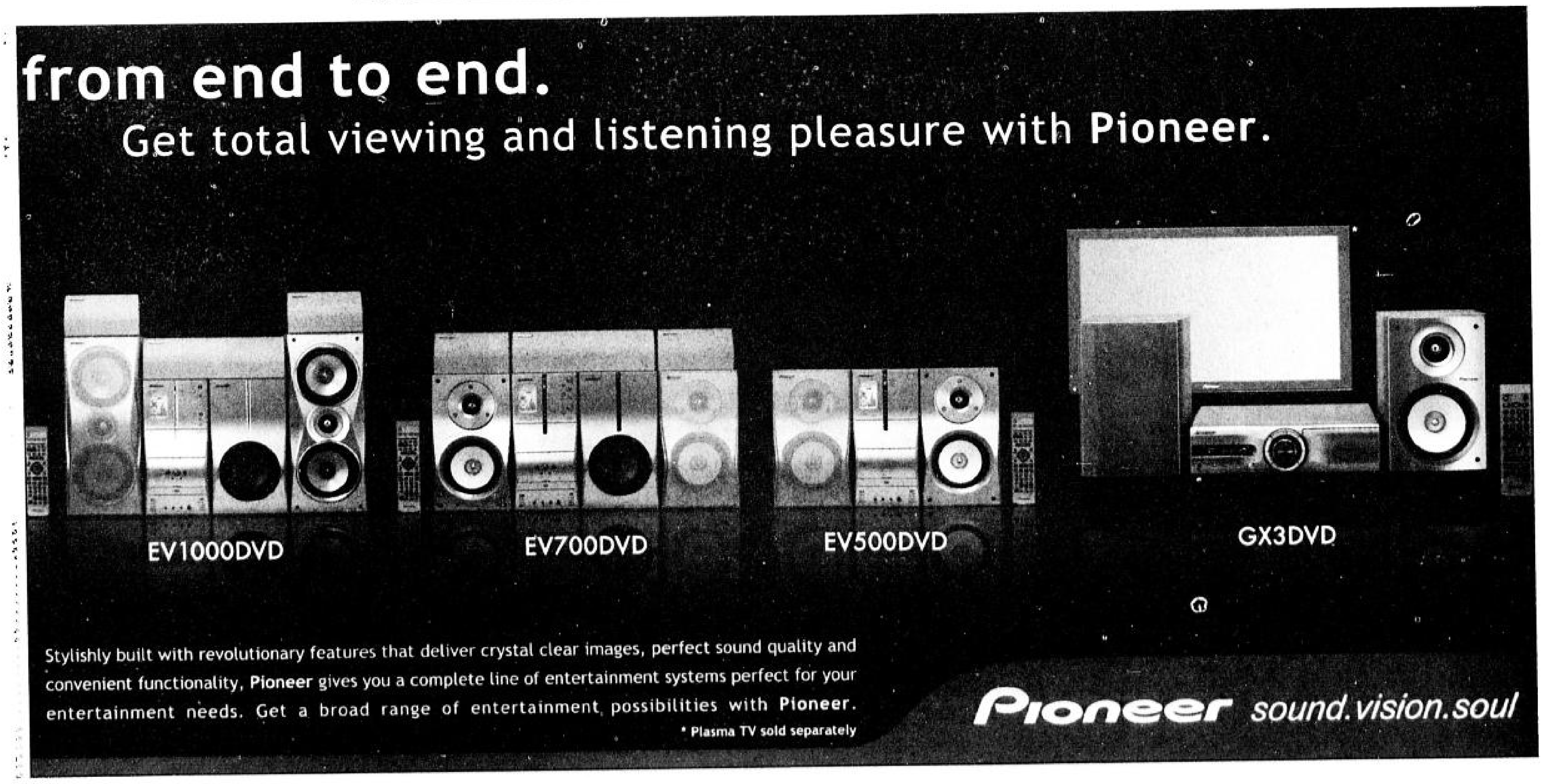
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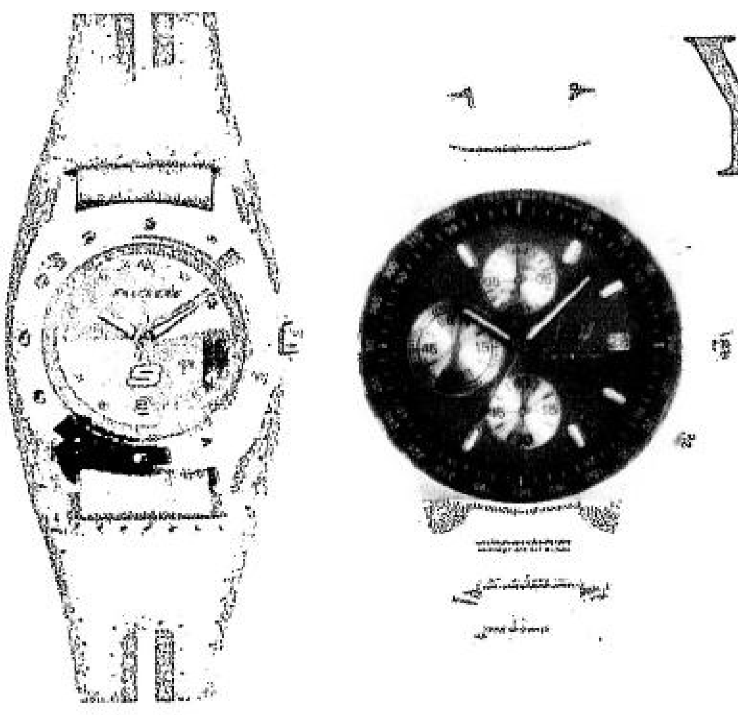
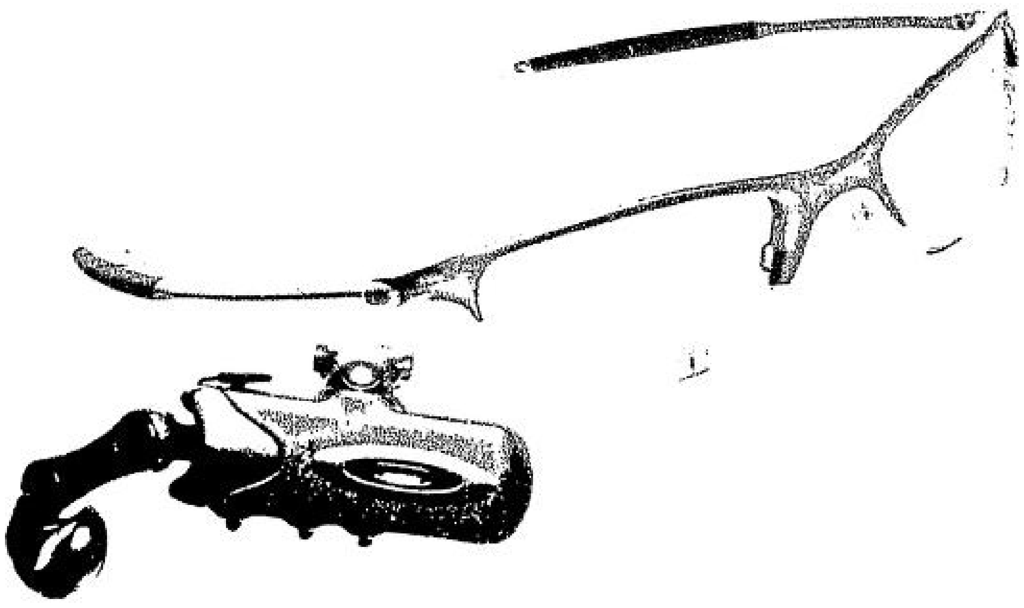
Yule time

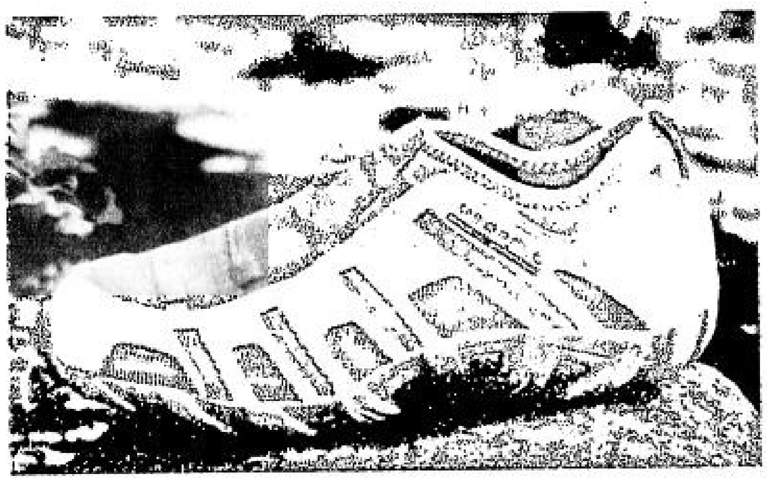
ONE of Time Magazine's A-list picks for December 2005, TechnoMarine's revolutionary Color Ceramic Chronograph collection for both women and men is now available, in colors ranging from white to baby pink, ocean blue and black. Water resistant to 200m, the watch boasts Swiss movements, guilloche dials, and a choice of diamond or ceramic bezels. TechnoMarine collections are available at TechnoMarine stores in Greenbelt 3 (7573975) and SM Megamall Bldg. A (6317491); Rafael Jewellery Stores in Edsa Shangri-La Plaza Mall (6363399) and at the Makati Shangri-La Hotel (8138501); My Diamond in Glorietta 4 (7571086) and in Gateway Mall (9124013) and My Tempo in SM North (9277620).



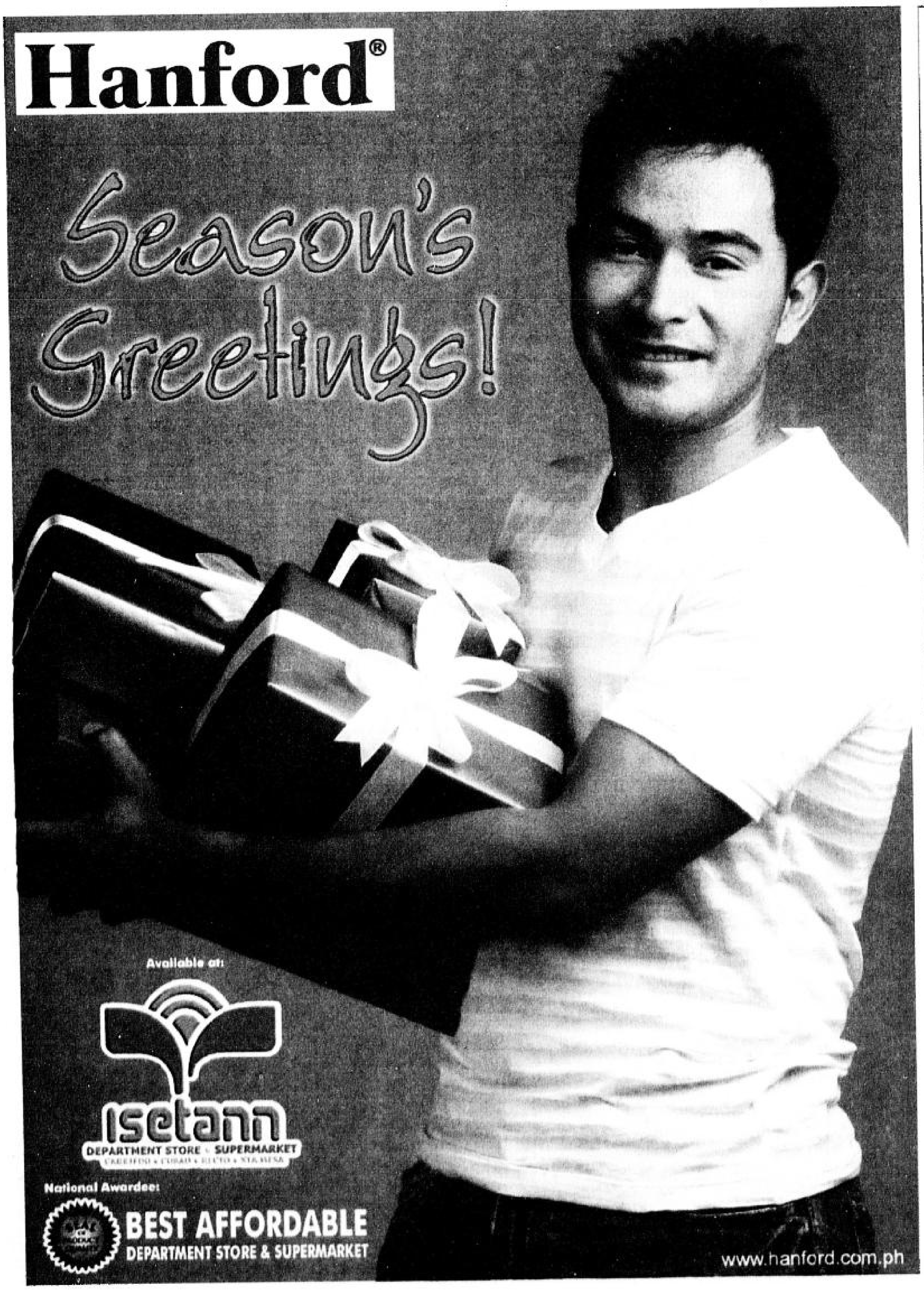
DROOL over Skechers Time's Chronograph collection, which comes in vibrant colors and sporty designs. The watches are up to 100m water-resistant and made of solid all-stainless steel. For the ladies: Skechers Time's stylish takes on digital and analog watches that come in colorful plastic wraps and leather straps. All Skechers Time watches also come in stainless steel casebacks for solid protection. Available at all Fusion Concept shop outlets and at SM Department Store branches in Megamall, Manila, Makati, Southmall, Pampanga, Harrison Plaza, Sta. Mesa, North Edsa and Dasmariñas.



ENJOY hands-free wireless communication with your cell phone via Oakley's Razrwire. This hands-free communication wonder allows you to be away as far as 33 feet from your cell phone, gives you up to six hours of continuous talk time and standby time of up to 100 hours. It eliminates the inconvenience of conventional headsets that force you to remove your eyewear. The O-Luminum frame is 40-percent lighter than pure titanium, offering maximum comfort. The sunglasses don't take the backseat in this gadget. Razrwire features patented XYZ Optics, which maximizes clarity at all angles of vision, and pure Plutonite lenses which filter out 100 percent of all UV, not just UVA and UVB.



MERRELL'S latest collection of shoes and sandals easily fits any adventure enthusiasts' discriminating preference for high-quality performance footwear. They have the patented Air Cushion midsole which absorb shock four times the body weight while adding stability. Merrell Performance Footwear is available at all SM department stores, sports specialty stores, and other leading department stores nationwide.



Easy way to acquire high-end gadgets

TO MAKE IT EASIER ON THE pocket to buy gadgets and appliances this Christmas from Avant and other Abenson stores, American Express Bank is offering a zero-interest promotion to cardmembers up to Dec. 31.

Under the promotion, American Express Peso Platinum Card members can purchase select appliances and gadgets from Abenson, Avant, Abea and Electroworld at no interest rate with terms from 3-12 months.

In addition to this service, American Express has tied up with the Abenson Group to offer consumers hands-on training on how to use the newly acquired zero interest gadgets, gizmos, and the popular big-screen televisions.

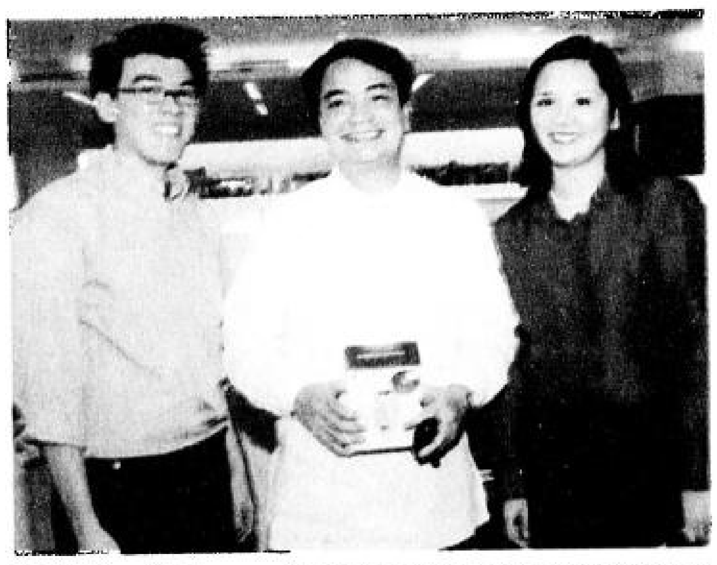
Recognizing that most of the American Express Card members are top executives who may not have the time or inclination to study instruction manuals, the credit card company offers the services of trained personnel from Abenson and its higher-end gadget and appliance store, Avant. The sales personnel, many of whom have engineering or IT backgrounds, can patiently explain how to use a new television remote control or the Internet function of newer and more sophisticated cell phones.

At Abenson and Avant, American Express Card members enjoy zero interest on all items for three months, except computers, electronics and concessionaire items. If they purchase a television, audio system, air conditioner, washing machine, refrigerator or gas range, zero interest repayments are spread over six months. In addition, American Express Cardmembers enjoy a 12-month repayment period on purchases of all big screen televisions (40 inches screen and above). With each big screen television purchase (except Sony Bravia LCD), they get a free 512mb Apple iPod Shuffle.

For purchases in Electroworld, American Express Platinum card members can enjoy 3-6 months zero-interest installments on selected items for laptops, cell phones, mp3 players, printers, faxes and computers and 12 months zero-interest installments on selected digital cameras. A free Genius or Creative brand webcam comes with the laptop. At Abea, known for its high-end furniture, the promotion covers all items at zero percent for six months.

In addition to the free technical training on product usage, Avant offers a price guarantee. This means that when a buyer is able to produce the proof that the same unit costs less in another store, they will match the price and refund the difference.

Visit www.americanexpressbank.com.ph or call 8144777.



AMEX Peso Platinum cardholder Enrique Soriano (center) won a top-of-the Sony Ericson mobile phone at the launch of Amex's zero-interest promo in November. Overseeing the draw and promo launch were (left) Avant branch manager Walter Lim and Amex card marketing head (right) Patty Pronove-Henson.